LESSON 1
THE ISLAMIC VISION

Youth is the most important period in the life of a human being. This is because it marks that stage when an individual passes out of the first stage of life i.e. childhood and begins the journey to the last stage i.e. adulthood.

Childhood is a dependant period. Every child requires guidance from elders and moral support to make and maintain correct decisions. In the early years of life, the hand of another leads a child but as adolescence and youth begin to emerge, the child learns to pull away and walk by himself.

During this period enormous physical, mental and emotional changes occur. It is a metamorphosis of character and intellect and could be likened to an explosion, rejuvenating all parts of an individual. Dormant inclinations awake in the youth and new horizons are sighted. To the person experiencing this change, it seems as if yesterday he was living in a child's dream and today he sees the world through the window of reality.

It is at this time, that a human being seeks purpose of his existence and forms the principles that will guide him through the rest of his life. Thus, the period of youth is one that must be nurtured and nourished well both by the young individual himself and by the adults surrounding him.

Seeking Independence

One of the most important inclinations during this stage is that of seeking *independence*. This tendency plays a major role in the life of a human being. It is prompted by the need to break completely away from childhood, which as we mentioned is dominated by dependency.

When a youth realizes that he is growing he feels that he must prove himself to be unique. He can only do this if he breaks free of the bonds of childhood and the reliance he has developed on parents, siblings etc. This searching for independence also signals the beginning of intellectual maturity as the youth begins to think for himself and make his own decisions.

Seeking independence is a positive step and should be encouraged so that the youth can grow into a strong and firm adult. However, the journey towards independence must be accompanied by a sense of awareness – a conscious knowledge of what is ahead and what must be done.

This awareness is essential before anything else because it guards a youth from choosing the wrong path. A young person who is eager to achieve his independence can easily be tempted to adopt a selfish attitude and drown in a sea of mistakes. The child in him still has some hold over his thinking and without making a conscious effort to control his emotions, he cannot expect to succeed against it. This consciousness also helps to develop and strengthen

intellectual powers as it encourages a young person to question his thinking and prevents him from following concepts blindly.

In the period of youth, brain efficiency enters a new stage and special talents are fully explored. It is for this reason that pathologists refer to this stage as the beginning of the brain. The brain begins to ask many new questions and satisfactory answers to these must be provided.

What Action to Take?

When we embark upon any task in our life, the result is positive or negative depending on the conscious choices we make along the way. Basically, this means that the manner in which we think about situations and the decisions we make in regards to them are what form the deciding factors of our success or failure.

We can immediately make out how well developed the consciousness of an individual by looking at the actions that result from them. The behaviour of a human being shows others the extent and maturity of his thinking.

Many scholars regard intellect as the human's basic superiority over animals. That is why man is called a 'Thinking Animal'. This title clearly implies that if man does not put his power of thinking into action, he is no better than an animal that relies on instinct for survival.

The stronger a man's thinking power is, the better he can utilize it in solving complex issues. We can develop our intellect by beginning with the implementation of the following essential factors:

1. Intensity of Thought

Before making any decisions, we must of course think about what we are doing, why we are undertaking it and the possible results of any decision we are tempted to make. The more deeply we ponder on these issues, the more we are likely to understand the issue. This prevents hasty decisions made on superficial grounds.

2. Sound Thinking

Our contemplation must be based on reason and logic. For this purpose we require a balance in our consciousness. The more precise a man's awareness is, the more his thoughts will be capable of understanding.

We can illustrate this by imagining that our decision-making ability is a factory, whose raw material is the conscious. Without raw materials, the factory will not be able to produce anything.

A thing to be careful about is that our thinking should be based on facts, not guesses or assumptions. The latter not only obstructs intellectual power in the situation at hand but also prevents future development of the mind.

3. Seeking the Truth

In any attempt to analyse or contemplate, we must train ourselves to seek out the truth. Nothing should be of more importance that this.

Accepting ideas and opinions without searching for flaws or solid foundations leads to hasty actions. Such decisions may provide immediate satisfaction of our desires but in the long wrong, they will only harm us. If we do not form the habit of seeking out the truth in every circumstance then we will lower our level of thinking and never learn how to differentiate truth from falsehood.

Islamic Point of View

In Islam, the necessity of intellect has been given great emphasis. The Holy Qur'an cautions people against following things blindly.

" (O Man) Do not follow that which you have no knowledge of …"

Sura Bani Isra'il, Verse 36

In this verse, we can see that Islam encourage man to think and research on information before accepting it as the truth. This emphasis is so immense, that the accepting of the tenets of faith i.e. Tawheed, Nubuwwat, Imamat and Qiyamat, blindly is not allowed. An individual must ponder upon and be convinced of the truth before his belief is accepted. From the viewpoint of Islam, a person who has attained maturity is one who is intellectually advanced.

According to Allah (S.W.T.), if a person guides his thoughts towards seeking out the truth then he will easily be able to identify it from falsehood. This is why there is no force in religion – anyone who truly seeks God will find Him. The Qur'an says:

"There is no compulsion in religion. Guidance is distinguishable from error"

Sura Baqara, Verse 256

From this verse, we understand that the cause of man's deviation from the Right Path is his lack of thinking and contemplation and his tendency towards hasty decisions.

Hasty Decisions

If Muslims would be satisfied with judgments based on weak arguments then they would find themselves confusing religious teachings with superstition and innovation – a problem that faces many other faiths. Islam requires that every argument and action be founded on solid reasoning and sound judgment. The Qur'an acknowledges men of knowledge as those who respect the Laws of God.

"Only the realistic and visionary men are obedient to Allah."

Sura Fatir, Verse 28

To better understand the-long term effects of making hasty decisions, we can outline two different examples:

a. Vulnerability Towards Disagreeing Views

It is a fact that various cultures exist in the world and that the Muslim Ummah is composed of members who come from these differing social systems. However, Islam demands that every culture should take second place when there is a choice between it and religion.

If an individual does not think deeply about the norms of his society, he may find himself following traditional values that have no place in Islam or worse still, contradict it.

An adult who can analyse the reasons for adopting a practice and compare them to religious laws, is able to choose and decide what to keep and what to discard. Such people allow the various cultures to co-exist and the Islamic culture to take top priority in all cases.

b. Lack of General Knowledge

As a child grows into an adult, many questions arise in his mind. Some regard daily activities while others about more philosophical issues.

To most young people, life is the most important of all issues. What is our aim in life? What are our goals? How do we lead a happy and successful life? These and other similar questions keep coming forward and must be answered in order to allow the youth to base his character and principles on.

Although these are the main questions, we must realize that the answers to these questions are based many a time in our more common activities and the manners that govern them. How to eat, what to wear, what kind of company to keep, all these are directly or indirectly connected to the bigger issues mentioned above. The way in which we behave guides the way in which we look at the world and the manner in which we make our decisions.

In order to mature successfully, we have to study the knowledge available to us – both Islamic and Secular. As we study the rules and laws set out by Allah (S.W.T.) and observe the lives of people who have followed or rejected these laws, we learn what we must do in order to succeed.

It is clear to understand that if we try to live our lives based on ignorance and do things hastily, as we feel inclined to, then we will surely end up failing in whatever we attempt.

LESSON 2

IDEOLOGY AND DOCTRINE

In the previous lesson, we discussed about the importance of general knowledge. Let us further expound on this subject.

Say for example that you intend to travel to a foreign city that you have never been to for a holiday. You would first begin by choosing the city you wish to see. This decision is based on what you want to achieve. It may be something you saw on television, read in a book or even the recommendation of friends. Next, to ensure that you are able to make the most of your stay there, you will ensure that your travel arrangements are all well organized. The most sensible thing to do would be to study brochures and find out what means of transport would best suit you in terms of speed and finance, what the weather conditions are going to be like at the time you visit, what sites there are to see, health risks etc.

By the time you actually set out, it will be true to say that the schedule of your holiday is based on the *knowledge*, which you have equipped yourself with.

Be Aware Of Your Aim

From the example above, we can see that we make choices based on our goals or aspirations. Once this is determined then we work on how to achieve it i.e. the program, based on knowledge that we research and gather. Remember, our brains undertake all these processes *voluntarily*.

We can therefore divide any final achievement into three basic elements:
1. Awareness of the situation.
2. Determining the aim.
3. Laying out a program based on knowledge gathered.

Even something as simple as choosing how to get to work is based on these stages. We are first aware of the situation i.e. that we need to get to work. Then we determine the aim which is to get there as fast as possible and before the time given by the employer. Finally, we choose a mode of transport (the program) based on information that we gather about travel fare, timetables and time spent on the road.

Worldview, Ideology And Doctrine

The human being also seeks the greater truths in life, following this method. Man wants to know what is in the universe that he lives in (Awareness), he then chooses his goals in life (Aim) and lastly decides the action required to achieve those goals (Program).

The general awareness that we have about the world we live in is called the Global Outlook, Global Perspective or *Worldview*. It allows us to have a birds-eye view of the world – including animate and inanimate objects – but has

nothing to do with any major matters in the philosophy of life e.g., one may learn about rivers or forests, but this has no effect on our outlook towards the world.

However, the general awareness of our surroundings allows us to realize that the world must be under the control of a Supreme Being and this has a strong effect on how we perceive life. As we try to learn more about the world, we begin to determine our aims and seek programs to fulfill them.

It is during this stage that we are able to decide for ourselves what our obligations are. We can distinguish what we must do and not do, in order to reach our final aims. These programs (set of rules) that we discover are called *Ideologies*. Therefore, an ideology can be described as a group of Must's and Must-not's that guide us towards noble ends.

The concepts of Worldview (Global Outlook) and Ideology together are called a *Doctrine* (School of Thought). Thus, every doctrine has two basic factors: its world outlook and its aims and programs.

Relationship Of Worldview to Ideology

We have seen that if you intend to spend quality time in a city, you must be prepared with the relevant information regarding that place and your trip to it. When your information is doubtful or incorrect, you will not be able to effectively benefit from it.

Similarly, the more our knowledge about the world we live in, the better our chances of spending a life of quality in it. We can take full advantage of our short lives if we seek and obtain correct information about it.

Different Worldviews = Different Ideologies

Every doctrine has its peculiarities. This means that every school of thought has it own set of Must's and Must-not's and its own unique outlook on the world. With this in mind, it can be said that every individual should strive to attain the correct vision of the world and build his outlook on firm and strong pillars.

Basic Worldview Issues

The issues raised from different world outlooks normally are in regards to the following three factors:

1. The world in which we live in and its mortality i.e. did it come into existence by itself or was it created? The answer to this question deals with knowing God.

2. Is man's life confined to this world or is there a possibility of another life after death? This normally tackles the issues of resurrection and eternal life.

3. Can man administrate his own affairs in life or does he need God's guidance? This can be associated with the issue of Nubuwwat (Prophethood).

Because the most basic views of any doctrine rely on these concepts, Islam emphasizes them as being the Usul – e – Deen (Roots of Religion). Acceptance of Tawheed (Monotheism), Nubuwwat (Prophethood) and Ma'ad (Day of Reckoning) are the pre-requisites of being a Muslim. Neglecting or discrediting any of these excludes a person from Islam.

From the answers of the above three questions, two broad types of world outlooks are derived:

1. Materialistic / World Worldview
   This is based on the belief that stability equals wealth and that man is a materialistic being. This view regards life to be a temporary period and death to be final. The materialistic worldview says that man came on earth by chance and that life has no deeper meaning. Such an outlook prevents the development of any long-term or noble aims. It is an existence without hope.

2. Divine Worldview
   The other view confirms that the world belongs to a Creator. It also believes in an everlasting life after this short worldly one. It looks upon the time spent in this world as a means of constructing ones destiny in the hereafter. This leads to the belief that there exists a certain code of life to attain the success and people who are sent by the Creator to teach it.

If we ponder on this we can see that the belief or disbelief in God results in the acceptance or rejection, respectively, for the other two factors i.e. Prophethood and Resurrection. This is why the first is more fundamentally important then latter.

Considering a Doctrine

In conclusion we can say that when examining any doctrine (School of Thought), we must first study its world outlook. Its basic principle i.e. concerning its position towards the issue of God is the most important when trying to establish its authenticity.

We will in the course of this text, discuss the issues of knowing God and then the *Islamic* World Outlook.

LESSON 3
KNOWING GOD

Before we begin to study the ways in which we can know God, it is necessary that we first look at the various methods we, as human beings, use to gather any kind of information or knowledge.

Capturing Knowledge

We know that one of man's specialties is that he is always in search of gaining more information about the world he lives in. He yearns to know about anything that is related to both his internal and external world. Because the knowledge he seeks comes in different forms, he is equipped with different skills to deal with this variety.

There are four main skills a human being uses:

1. Senses (Direct Capture)

   The most ancient and transparent way of gaining knowledge is through use of our five basic senses. We see the different colours and shapes that fill our world; we listen to birds singing and babies crying; we learn the variety of flavours available through our sense of taste; we smell the aromas that things give off and finally feel textures through touch. The information we get in these ways is direct because the particular sense sends the message straightaway to the brain.

2. Experiments (Indirect Capture)

   Despite the fact that many obvious things are learnt through direct capture, there are many aspects of our universe that cannot be discovered by using any of the five senses. For example, we cannot observe the actual *flow* of electricity in a live wire with any of our sense our senses. We cannot use our senses to discover things such as atoms, electrons and magnetism.

   Our conclusions on these subjects are a result of indirect methods of discovery. Instead of seeing the actual object in question, we base our knowledge on the effect it has on other things, e.g. we know that there is a flow of electricity when we see the resulting light.

   Another clear example is in regards to people's thoughts. We cannot discover what goes on in another's mind with any of our senses, but through that persons speech we are able to judge his thoughts and character.

   When talking of indirect methods of gaining knowledge, we can refer to it as an 'intellectually-based' approach because it relies on the brain to process the information and apply it to the knowledge being searched for. Many of the achievements in science are achieved through this system.

3. Intellect

The use of intellect to gain knowledge has been separated from the indirect approach because of a fundamental difference that exist between the two. In the indirect method of capturing knowledge, a human being reasons based on the result of his senses, but the use of intellect does not rely on the senses to provide the raw information with which to work.

An example of this is the science of Mathematics. When we study other sciences such as chemistry and physic, we know that we must carry out experiments, capture information with our five senses and then apply this using theories that we have come up with. This is not so in mathematics.

Mathematics depends solely on thought processes of the brain. In this science, you can get a thousand results from a few basic sources, without need for any experiments. Here the foundation stone of the knowledge is based on the brain.

4. Emotion

Our internal understanding is another way in which we gain knowledge. We are capable of feeling sorrow, happiness, fear, courage, love and hatred. These feelings are direct, meaning we can experience them without any interference of outside influences.

If we are happy, we don't achieve this state with the help of any of the five senses, or the brain. The condition is directly felt in our heart. This is a result of an inner instinct that illuminates various ways for man.

Unseen Does not mean Unavailable

From the above methods, it is obvious to see that the existence of something does not depend on our being able to sense it. Many people deny God because that cannot see Him. To them what cannot be seen does not exist. However, if this were truly the case then we would also have to deny much of the useful scientific achievements that have been accomplished so far.

Our reasoning demands proof of existence so likewise we should also have proof of inexistence. When we have a lack of proof, we can say that we do not have knowledge about the subject but this is not the same as saying the subject does not exist.

To judge the presence or absence of anything, we need to first get information about it. If it happens to be unseen, then that will not automatically mean it is absent. If we do not manage to get enough reasons to prove either its presence or absence, then the phrase "I don't know" can be used to show that neither opinion has been sufficiently verified. This will also leave the door open to future discovery and argument in favour of either the present or absent stand.

To explain this concept better, let us take the following example. Suppose you are standing in your home and somebody asks you if your best friend is standing at a certain corner in town, which is out of your sight. What would you say? Would you deny that your friend is there just because you cannot see him? Or would you say you don't know? The first is obviously an illogical answer. The second would be more sensible and would allow you to confirm later on whether your friend was on that corner or not.

From this we can conclude that not seeing something is not a sign of its absence.

How to Know God

Having looked at the various methods we use to gather and absorb information, we can now see how a human being using these skills to learn about God and His existence. It is clear that God cannot be found using the direct capture system, because He does not have a material or physical form. Since our senses cannot detect Him, we must turn to the other ways. Each of these can help us better understand God and prove He exists.

1. Indirect capture. In the same way we use experiments, sign and effects to prove Laws and theories in this world, we can observe the system around us and from its signs seek the path that will lead us to God.

2. Use of intellect. This is the most complete method for solving the issue of knowing God. By using our intellectual power we can prove the existence of the Creator. The causes of effects (*See Book Three*) are the main intellectual reasons used to prove the existence of God.

3. By relying on our emotional understanding we can also discover God. This kind of knowledge is called *spiritual knowledge* and will be dealt with in more detail later.

LESSON 4
USING THE SYSTEM AS PROOF OF GOD
Part I

One of the ways of knowing God is through the study of the system that is the universe. This has been called the 'Proving System' because it helps us to prove the necessity of a Maker and Caretaker for such a complex structure. In this lesson let us look briefly at how we can use this proof.

Systems

A group of components that work together to achieve a common goal is referred to as a *system*. In our ancient universe, there are many groups of things that can be classified as being either arranged systematically or non-systematically.

A single object in itself cannot be called a system. From its very definition we know that for a system to exist, it must involve a number of objects even though these may be varied in the nature of their structure and function.

Another important point is that the objects that are part of a system must all work together to directly or indirectly fulfill a common aim. The most amazing and obvious example of this is the human body. Every organ in the body has a particular function: providing and allowing nourishment, protecting against viruses, dealing with wounds, cleansing blood, etc. But in the end all these activities are meant to do only one thing and that is to preserve life.

Of course, this means that it is necessary that every part of the system perform its duties correctly, or else it may disrupt or destroy the whole. In some cases, a component may be dispensable and if this is the case, it will be removed by the other components. However, in the case of essential components, the system is doomed if one small mishap occurs.

Qualities of the Parts In A System

For any system to survive, its elements or components must fulfill certain conditions. We will use examples from the human body to explain these:

1. **Structure**
   Each element must possess the required structure or capability to carry out its specific function correctly and efficiently. For example, the structure of each bone in the body is such that it corresponds to the bones around it in order to form the skeleton with its joints.

2. **Co-operation**
   Every part of a system must co-operate with the rest of the group. Thus, each component is a supplement to the others and together they form a united functioning whole.

3. **Size**
   The size and measurement of every element must be suited to its function. For example, if our fingers were either bigger or smaller than they are then they would not be able to perform their duties so well.

4. **Position**
   Every part of a system must have a special position within it. Try and imagine what would happen if our eyes were positioned on the top of our heads or if our ears were at the ends of our legs!

Survival of Systems

In order for a system to be maintained over a period of time, it must adequately meet its own needs. Two types of needs exist in such a group.

a. **Practical needs:** These are those necessities that are required directly by the components to survive. In the case of human beings, it would refer to things such as oxygen, food and water. If we do not eat or drink for a long period of time, then our body recognizes this lack of nourishment through the feelings of hunger/thirst. The body (system) then uses its senses to search for and consume food or water, which it needs to survive.

b. **Future needs:** These refer to the long-term needs that a system has in order to assure its continuity in the future. This is usually dealt with by the various components in a manner that can be best described as *foresight.* Amongst humans, an example could be the need that every individual has to procreate and thus perpetuate their species through reproduction.

LESSON 5
USING THE SYSTEM AS PROOF OF GOD
Part II

In the previous lesson we reached a conclusion that in any system, every part has its own special duty, but that each parts is varied in shape, size, position and function. We also saw that a particular element may be excluded due to lack of functionality or efficiency.

Having said this, we can ask the following questions:
- Why is it that from all the different things in the world, only certain entities have been assembled in a particular group?
- And in addition to this, why have elements with certain qualities and functions been selected above the countless other varieties available?

When we contemplate the details of an orderly group, our intellect will show us that the creator of the group must have had an aim to begin with. In order to achieve this aim, he then laid down a design or plan for what would have to been done. Based on this plan, he would choose special components to perform the functions required. However, the choices would have to be made by an expert in the field so that each part would perform up to the standard desired.

From the above assessment we can derive four principles that every organized system must be based upon:
1. Aim
2. Plan/Design
3. Choice of parts/elements
4. Expert advice on choices

Qualities Of A Maker
Of course, it is now obvious that the Maker or Creator of a system must have an Aim to begin with, design the system, select its components and have the relevant knowledge at hand to make these selections wisely and correctly.

However, despite having these abilities, if he does not possess one fundamental quality then the others are void/useless. This basic quality is that of consciousness. If the Maker is not *aware* then the system cannot survive. Would you expect a child who is unaware of any of the laws governing this world to produce an article explaining the workings of his remote control car? Hardly!

Or try to imagine that this book you are holding is the result of a series of coincidences where a sudden reaction of gases and matter created the paper and then brought together atoms in pattern that just happened to form characters into sensible sentences. A little too farfetched, is it not?

Thus, for anything to exist and especially those things that are related to the intellect, there has to be some sort of pre-planned program that has been set into action. Logic cannot accept that anything remotely organized can *'just happen'*.

The world around us is full of information and the very fat that we get much of our knowledge from it shows that it was created by an intelligent entity that was capable of not only creating a complex, working system but also hiding knowledge within it for us to find.

The universe is more complicated in itself than all the technology that man has discovered in the past thousands of years! Many inventors have got their inspiration for their discoveries and inventions from the natural systems around them, thus it is possible to say that the efforts of mankind are only a weak reflection of the natural world around us

Inspiration From Nature

One of the wonders of our natural world is the ability that bats have to hunt and move about in darkness. Man, through observation and experiment, discovered that this is not due to extremely sharp vision (as was first believed) but rather is a result of an echo-signal that the bat uses to detect objects in its path.

The bat send out high pitched squeaks all the time as it flies and its extra sensitive hearing picks up on any echoes that bounce back, indicating a physical obstacle.

Based on this phenomenon, Man developed his *radar* systems which is a similar process, in that radio signals are sent out and radio echoes detected and translated to show where obstacles are. Sonar is even closer to the example set by the bat because it uses sound echoes and can be used under water and for deep geological research where radar does not work.

Once they realized how much there was to be learned from nature, scholars founded a new science with the name BIONIC which is aimed at examining and researching living organisms and applying their techniques to our computerized systems.

Borrowing From The Solar System

Isaac Newton is a famous 17th Century scholar. He was known to have made a model of the solar system using marbles, ropes and belts that showed the position and movement of the planets. Once a friend who did not believe in God came to visit him and saw the model for the first time. Amazed by the structure, he asked Newton: "*Who made this model?*"

Newton replied: *"Nobody."*

The man was surprised at this answer and asked him again, *"Didn't you understand my question? I asked who made that?"*

Again Newton replied, *"It brought itself into existence."*

The man stared at him. *"Do you think I am crazy?"* he asked. *"Someone must have made this model and from its complexity it must have been a genius! I would like to know him."*

At that Newton said to him, *"My friend, this model is a small imitation of our entire solar system. It shows the earth we live on as a simple, small marble and yet you say it needs a creator to have made it and call him a genius.*

"How can you then believe that this magnificent world came into existence without a creator?"

This is an extremely solid argument that can be presented to prove the need and existence of a God. We need to realize that we have studied this nature around us for centuries and have managed to barely scratch the surface of the wonders hidden in it. We then need to ask ourselves:

- If all the efforts of the best minds of our species have taken so long produced so little, how is it possible for the very source of this knowledge to be an accidental one?
- How can we derive so much law and order from something we consider a product of chaos?
- Why do our theories hold steady and our laws of science provide foundations for more laws to be derived from them? Surely, if the world came about as a result of coincidences then there should be flaws in the system.

Francis Beacon, who is known in history as the Father of New Science says:
"I can not accept that the constructor of this world, created it without consciousness and intelligence. This philosophy can lead a man to infidelity, but profound philosophy guides man towards the realization of religion."

Theology And Its Development Theories

When man became well versed with the sciences, he began to believe that there was no need for a superior power in this world. His ego prompted him to develop a theory that would allow him to be the highest intellectual in the universe and leave him free to do as he wished with no accountability to anyone else. This theory is that of evolution.

The idea of evolution is based on the belief that things that exist today first began in a different raw form. Through the times, these basic simple forms then developed and adapted in the innumerable varieties of organisms and species that we see today. The people who hold this concept to be true believe that such an explanation of our origins would remove the necessity of having a Planner and

Creator. Thus, their fight is not against any one faith but against religion in its entirety.

To prove them wrong we do not need to go out and search for more information. Just developing their concept to its full meaning allows us to see that the argument actually proves the need for a Creator rather than disapproving it! Consider the following:

1. The theory of evolution may have an answer to how we came to be today and explain this saying that it is the result of gradual development through the millennia. However, if we go back as far as the origins, there still remains the question of *"Where did that origin come from?"* Continuity is possible once a system is started but to set the system into action, you require a Creator. We see plenty of automatic machines in the world that work on their own, but that does not cause us to believe that they came to be without a creator or designer.

2. To accept that the amazingly complicated systems that exist today came to be through coincidental changes along the years is to ask human beings to accept something without using their intellect and logic. How can it be possible that just the right change should occur in the right order to result in the different perfect structures? The probabilities we would have to rely on in each case are unbelievable!

   Let us take an extremely simple example to illustrate this point. Say a man wants to walk from his house to particular building across the town. He has to cross certain streets and take certain roads in order to reach it. If you see him when he is on this walk, you would not understand why he was taking the corners he chose and wonder at them. On the other hand, if you happen to know his purpose then you immediately understand that he chose the particular route in order to reach his destination. Now, ask yourself, if he had begun walking without thought and crossed streets and roads at random, what were the chances that he would reach that building at all? At every point, his choices would have had one right one and numerous wrong ones. Had he chosen a wrong turn even once, he would have deviated from his path and with every choice after that, he would have moved further away from the right road.

   It is the same with nature. Even according to evolution, for us to be who we are today, there must have been a pre-planned route that we would have to follow. Even the smallest disorder would have had a totally different and most probably chaotic result. This means that we have to accept the existence of a Plan and therefore of a Planner.

From the above we can see that gradual development theory does not really cause any hindrance to the Proving System and its arguments.

The Creator is One

In the world around us there are systems that work in different manners on different principles. Two basic kinds are as follows:

1. The systems we create in our factories e.g. clocks, cameras, binoculars, computers, etc. In such systems, the different parts of the whole are created individually and then set together in a special way in order to make them work in co-ordination.

2. The system we see in man's words through speech or writing. In this case, we do not just pick words and then arrange them. Rather we think of what it is that we want to say or express and then use or create the words required giving them a link to each other and thus forming a system. Writing is the same where we place every word and sentence in a particular place to give them meaning. This changes depending on our aim.

The system in the world of nature is of the second type. The various parts within it were not created once and organized in a fixed manner to perform a function. All the things created have their special place in the universe and changes do occur in order to meet the final aim of the Creator of the system.

Just as when speaking, it is a person alone who expresses himself, the Expresser of the system is also One and Alone in His creation.

LESSON 6
GOD IN THE MIRROR OF NATURE

What is Nature?

The qualities that man possesses are of two types. Firstly, those that are gained through instruction like reading, writing, driving, sports etc. The second are those qualities that are inborn in him and require no training like affection for friends and family, curiosity, sympathy, self-preservation and the like.

The second type of qualities may be categorized as instinct and while some them are found in both humans and other lower animals, others are specific to man alone. These include love of knowledge, hope of attaining perfection and inclination towards good.

These qualities are part of the Natural tendencies. They are found in animals and some are particular to man and most importantly they are not acquired.

God In Man's Nature

It is in this nature of man discussed above that he should seek out and accept God. Although, the actual knowledge and proof comes later in life when he can speak, read and think consciously, Man has this information imprinted in him from birth.

It is his inclination to submit to a Power worth obeying and worship that Supreme entity. Every individual seeks this entity and that is why we must put a conscious effort to learn about and know God. This will allow us to fulfill our inner desire and complete our goal.

While it is true that such feelings exist within a human being, a person has the right to ask for proof for such statements. So, how can we prove that the inclination towards God is inbred in the human character? There are several ways but we will explain only two:

I . Reaction in Danger

One of the clear signs of theology (religion) being natural in human being is that when a person finds himself helpless and has no hope of protection against impending danger, he finds himself instinctively calling out to a Someone – a higher power – who can save him when no one else can. This is usually the most sincere call a human ever experiences because he is faced with his own finite and weak self and realizes how little he can control the things that influence him. If the knowledge of God was not in his self, then how would this hope and plea arise?

One day a man came to visit Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) and asked him to prove the existence of Allah (S.W.T.). Imam (a.s.) asked him a question in return. *"Have you ever traveled by ship?"* he said.
The man replied, *"Yes, I have."*

"And have you ever been caught in a storm that you did not believe you would survive?" the Imam (a.s.) asked him.

"Yes, I have experienced that too," the man replied.

"At that moment of despair, did you give up all hope and resign to your death?"

The man thought about this and then told Imam (a.s.), "*No, I did not, O Imam! I had a hope that somehow I would survive through some miracle."*

Imam (a.s.) immediately told him, *"That hope, my friend, and the one you expected to perform the miracle was no other than Allah (S.W.T.) who is always in your heart and comes to your help when you call."*

There are also several verses in the Holy Qur'an that explain that in times of hardship, man tends to remember Allah (S.W.T.) and when his difficulties are removed, he forgets Him.

"In that situation when the sea waves stack on them, they supplicate to God with pure and sincere hearts, but when they reach the sea-shore safely, a group of them put moderation aside (and the other group deviates) and other than those who are ungrateful, nobody can not deny the signs of God."

Sura Luqman, Verse 32

The Qur'an speaks of these people as those with whom Allah (S.W.T.) is displeased. Remembering God at times of distress is a sign of being aware of Him, but if we remember Him only at these times then it also indicates our ungratefulness and negligence.

II. Endurance in History

The second proof we can use in our argument that knowing and needing God is in man's nature is that of the endurance of theology. Man's needs and desires control the existence, invention and lasting quality of anything he come sin contact with.

We know that as times pass, man looks to improve on what he has and with the coming of new things, the older models become rare and obsolete. Examples of such object are everywhere like the carts of long ago that have been replaced with cars and buses, or the use of electricity over the old kerosene lamps.

However, those things that are inbred in man do not change. They remain the same through the ages. Man's desire for peace and happiness, his loving nature,

his eagerness to learn and need of perfection have always been present and will continue to be because they are qualities in his nature. Nothing substitutes these and even if people have abandoned them in history sometimes, they always come back later to seek them out again.

The inclination to believe in a supreme deity is one of these natural qualities and has existed since the dawn of human history. Archeological investigations show that even during the days when language and society barely had any solid structure, the worship of God prevailed even in the form of idols. It is believed by some faiths that worship began with that of one God but later with civilization, polytheism developed.

This endurance shows that the belief is so well ingrained in the nature of man that despite all his progress and advancement, it has not been removed from his nature to this day.

What the Qur'an has to say

The Holy Qur'an introduces piety and the inclination to God as rising from within man:

"Then set your purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright – the nature made by Allah (S.W.T.), in which He has made men. There is no altering of Allah (S.W.T.)'s creation. That is the right religion, but most people do not know."

Sura al-Rum, Verse 30

Several points are found in this verse.

1. God has created mankind with the inclination of seeking Him.
2. Man's nature is unalterable and thus the seeking of God cannot be separated from him.
3. Most people are unaware of this reality and come up with doctrines that have no foundation according to their nature.

The Secret of the Prophets

We know that Prophets greatly influenced human history and that they did this with no great force at their liberty. Most were simple shepherds without any material wealth or power. Despite this, they managed to transform the world in their respective time, destroying great tyrannical empires and establishing new cultures.

Where did they get the ability to achieve all this? It is obvious that they did not force or bribe the people to accept their message and neither did they hypnotize them. Instead, they used the very power of the people themselves to bring about their revolutions. By encouraging people to become familiar with God within themselves and rely only on Him, they made them aware of the fires hidden within their nature. This was what led to their amazing success.

The prophets only brought messages to *remind* the people of what they already had. This is why the Qur'an calls them *Reminders* and *Warners*.

"Remind them for you are but a reminder. You are not dominant over them."

Sura Ghashiyah, Verses 21 & 22

The Prophets could not create the desire to seek God in men, this he had the capability to do himself. Rather, they showed the ways in which to use this desire and guided their strong inclinations in the right direction. The Prophets were sent to stop deviation towards idol worship and other wrong means of worship and the tendencies of man led him astray when he had no guide to help.

Why do Some go Against this Nature?

Having established that the inclination to God is a natural desire, why then do some people turn against it and deny God? Do they lack this quality? Why does it not push them towards God?

The reasons for this may include:

1. Man's different tendencies. Each individual gives priority to different desires and those wants that dominate in his personality overshadow those that do not. For example, you will always see in a class some students who spend their time on their lessons and others who concentrate only on enjoyment and do not bother about studying. Thus, while some people search for the truth, others deny it.

2. The natural qualities in any man need conditional assistance for their progress. If the family and social atmosphere around a child is not positive for the nurturing his character then these qualities may be suppressed or distorted.
   * *Note that this is a probability and there are cases when a person has the inclination to turn to God even when he has been brought up in an environment that was against this or vice versa.*

In conclusion, we can say that all worshipping systems that exist preach humility and submission to One Supreme Being. This conforms to the nature of humanity.

LESSON SEVEN
QUALITIES OF GOD

When you look at any object in this world, it reflects some quality or qualities of its inventor/creator. Take this book you are reading, through the writing, you can see what kind of person its author is. His qualities i.e. the extent of his knowledge, his opinions, his thoughts and ideas are all displayed to anyone who reads his book. If you look at a building you will be able to make out the creativity and competence of its architect.

The wondrous world we live in also shows the nature of its Creator and tells anyone who wishes to learn from it, about His unique qualities. The world therefore acts as a mirror in which the perfection of its Creator can be seen.

In this mirror, scientists have discovered things that surprise even the greatest amongst them. As man's knowledge increases, his amazement at the magnificence of this world also increases. Max Plank, a famous physicist says:
"As man advances in science, he accordingly remains further in childhood. He must always be prepared for new amazements."

This mirror thus reflects that its Creator must possess unlimited knowledge and perfection to be able to create such an awesome and complex structure.

Attributes of Allah (S.W.T.)

Since Allah (S.W.T.) is unlimited in His perfection, He possesses all attributes that arise from excellence. In describing them, we can divide them into Positive and Negative attributes. The word negative in no way refers to flaws but is used to describe the angle from which the perfect attributes are viewed. We will elaborate more on this under the relevant subsection.

Positive Attributes

Allah (S.W.T.) is **Knowledge.** The system of this world alone reveals His unlimited wisdom. His knowledge encompasses everything and there is no secret hidden from Him, be it deep in the hearts of people or high in the heavens above.

"…Surely Allah (S.W.T.) knows everything."

Sura Anfal, Verse 75.

Although we say that Allah (S.W.T.) listens to and sees everything, his hearing and sight is not like ours. He does not use eyes and ears and His perception is based on Knowledge and a Consciousness of everything.

Allah (S.W.T.) is **All-Powerful.** His creation in all its magnificence glorifies His immense capacity. Nothing is impossible for Him and in His unlimited ability there are no terms such as difficult, large or hard in description of tasks. His Power controls everything.

He created man, gave him life and death and after the human body decomposes, He is capable of raising him back to life and bringing him to Judgment on the Day of Qiyamat.

"…Surely God has power over all things."

Sura Baqarah, Verse 20

Allah (S.W.T.) is **Kind** and **Merciful.** There is no limit to his compassion and He is a thousand times more loving to people than their own parents can ever be. In His own words, He is closer to a human being than the jugular vein (a most important blood vessel situated in the neck).

Any body can communicate and become familiar with Him, sharing grievances and seeking support from Him. He is most considerate to those who plead with Him and take Him as their support.

"And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then surely I am very near, I answer the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me, that they may achieve perfection."

Sura Baqara, Verse 186

The above verse gives hope to all those who are in distress. Even when we feel guilty about the numerous sins we have committed, we should turn to Him for forgiveness and have faith that He will accept us back because He loves us. Despairing of the Mercy of God is a quality of the disbelievers and doubters.

"Verily none are desperate of Allah (S.W.T.)'s Mercy but the disbelieving people."

Sura Yusuf, Verse 87

Allah (S.W.T.) is **Ever-Living** and **Self-subsistant.** All things depend on Him to exist but He depends on nothing. His existence is not like that of other living organisms that require motion, growth, breath, food and reproduction to survive. These creations need certain elements for life and continuity - a condition of which Allah (S.W.T.) is absolutely independent.

"There is no God but Him, the Ever Living, the Self Subsistent."

Sura Baqara, Verse 255

In addition to these, Allah (S.W.T.) possesses numerous other qualities such as that He is Forgiving, Honourable, Needlessness, Praiseworthy etc.

Negative Attributes

A defect is lacking of something and since God is Perfect and lacks nothing, the title does not refer to any negative attributes in the literal sense. It actually talks of those qualities that arise from shortage and that ***cannot*** be attributed to Him.

Thus, those qualities that are NOT found in God are called Negative attributes. For example, ignorance and weakness are a result of lack of knowledge and potency and therefore ignorance and weakness are not found in God.

Allah (S.W.T.) is **not Material** because a substance is limited and transformable, and none of these qualities are found in Him.

A creation composed of parts and requires these to exist and survive, to such an extent that if any of the elements are removed that creature will become deformed or cease to exist. Thus the creation is needful of its parts and Need is not in the essence of Allah (S.W.T.).

Allah (S.W.T.) is also not composed of a substantial form because lack, dependency and shortcomings are inevitable to such a form. A body of any sort would require movement and would be open to change. Every motion and change needs a motive and Allah (S.W.T.) is needless of such a requirement.

Allah (S.W.T.) **inhabits no Space** because to do this He would have to be confined to an area. Allah (S.W.T.) is infinite and cannot be defined as occupying such and such a position or place. Thus, contrary to those who consider the place of Allah (S.W.T.) to be in the Heavens (skies), He does not dwell in any particular place but every place is a creation of His.

He is everywhere and cannot be pointed at. We should not mistake this to mean that he fills the entire universe from east to west but rather that He exists in a way we cannot observe or explain in terms of our own existence. This means that He cannot and will never be seen with human eyes. He can only be found in the heart with the vision of faith.

"Vision does not perceive Him but He perceive all visions; He is all aware and knower of the subtleties".

Sura An-aam, Verse 103

Imam Ali (a.s.) once replied a man who had asked him if he could see his God, saying, *"Eyes cannot perceive God, but hearts full of faith can recognize Him."*

There is no sleep, old age, negligence, regret, envy, lies or oppression in the attributes of God because all these are derived from shortcomings and He is free from any kind imperfection.

Allah (S.W.T.) is **not in need** of the prayers of His servants or of their good deeds, obedience and alms. It is we, the servants, who benefit from all these!
The wrath and the happiness of Allah (S.W.T.) do not mean that our actions cause an impression on Him, some of them angering Him and others causing Him joy.

These circumstances are not found in Allah (S.W.T.), because the necessary condition for them is that the subject in question should be changeable and

capable of being influenced. Whereas, transformation from one state to another, is not a quality found in God. When man performs a righteous deed, he seeks the Mercy of Allah (S.W.T.). We thus say, that Allah (S.W.T.) has applied His mercy to His nature. On the other hand when a person commits a sin, he is said to be far from the mercy of Allah (S.W.T.) and this is his greatest punishment.

Extent of our Knowledge

Having discussed so much about Allah (S.W.T.), we now need to ask ourselves that once we start this search for Him, how far can we go in it? How well can we truly know our God?

Generally, the extent of our knowledge about anything is in two levels:

1. Being aware of its Existence.
2. Knowing its condition in detail.

For the first kind of knowledge, any indication, no matter how small, is good enough for us. If someone claps his hands out of our sight, we need only have heard it to know that that it occurred.

However, to know who clapped their hands, why they were clapped and other details, we need to have the second level of knowledge mentioned. This requires us to ask questions, seek out the source etc. This means that we apply some sort of skill in acquiring the information.

We can therefore distinguish the two extents of knowledge by saying that the first needs nothing other then a natural sense while the second requires a level of intellect and ability.

On the subject of knowing Allah (S.W.T.), we can say that discovering His existence is easy through his creation. The heart sees the indications of His Presence and Power wherever it turns, and finds Him.

"Wherever you turn, the face of God is on that side."

Sura Baqarah, Verse 115

But knowing Allah (S.W.T.) fully – in the manner He knows Himself – is quite impossible for the human mind. This is due to the fact that Allah (S.W.T.) is an unconfined being and cannot be confined and understood by our flawed intellect. This does not mean that we cannot have *any* kind of knowledge about Him. Just discovering the positive and negative attributes of His nature is a means of knowing Him.

It has been highly recommended by our Aimmah (a.s.) that we work hard in strengthening our belief in Allah (S.W.T.). The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said:

"We do not know You in the real essence of Your knowledge, and we did not worship You in the real essence of Your worship".

Lesson 8

ONE Vs MANY

When we discuss theological issues, we use the word Monotheism to refer to the belief in one God and Polytheism for the belief in a number of deities. Each of these words holds a deeper meaning when discussed in full. As you read further, you will realize that the definitions are not as simple as they first seem to be.

I. MONOTHEISM

Monotheism – which is called *Tawhid* in Islam – can be divided into two major parts:

i. *Theoretical monotheism :* the faith that a person who believes in one God expresses.

ii. *Practical monotheism :* the effects and outcome of this belief in his life.

Let us first look at the theoretical:

i. Theoratical Tawhid

This in itself has different dimensions:

a. Monotheism in Essence.
b. Monotheism in Actions.

Let us look at each dimension in turn.

A. Monotheism in Essence

This is the basic principle of Monotheism. It means to believe that God is One in essence. He is unique and has no partner. This belief of oneness in essence has already been proven in a previous lesson. (Lesson 5)

We saw that the world is a well co-ordinated system that works perfectly without any flaw. Such organization shows that a single power controls the entire structure. That Power is God.

B. Monotheism In Actions

This means that God does not need help from anyone or anything else when performing His work. Whatever ability a creature possesses, God gave it him and therefore already has it. How is it possible to believe that a creation who is in constant need of God, should have the power to assist Him?

Looking at the other side of the coin, this belief also means that there is no being that is self-sufficient and needless of God. To elaborate on this, we should understand that every creature has the strength to perform its duty and effect other creations e.g. the sun has an effect on the growth and survival of plants and germs have the power to cause sickness in man. Despite this apparent control, neither the sun nor germs possess influence of their own accord. It was given to them by God and thus, they are not independent of Him. This is true of everything in existence.

There is only one independent influential entity in existence and that is Allah (S.W.T.). All control and authority is in His hands and none can change what He has willed. The Qur'an says:
"Praise be to God, Who has not taken a son, nor has He a partner in the Kingdom and He has no helper to save Him from disgrace. And proclaim His greatness, magnifying His glory.

Sura Al-Isra, Verse 111

Note that belief in monotheism of actions does not mean disowning man's free will. Rather, it means man's free will is from God and a creation of His.

ii. Practical Tawhid

After a man has proclaimed his belief in the oneness of God - theoretical Tawhid, then he must ask himself what relations must be established between God and himself. He must then implement this belief so that it can be seen practically in his life only then will he claim of faith hold true.

According to the belief of monotheism in actions, control of all affairs is with God. From this we derive the fact that no one deserves to be obeyed and worshipped except the Almighty. This is called practical monotheism i.e. worshipping only Him. This is why the first step to becoming a Muslim is to say "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah (S.W.T.)!" This is an expression of practical Tawhid.

To put belief to action requires establishing God as the centre of your heart and making Him your goal. Everything else takes second place to Him and His commands. In the Holy Qur'an we are told that Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) said:
"Surely I have turned myself, being upright wholly to Him who created the heavens and the earth and I am not of the polytheists."

Sura Anam, Verse 79

"Say surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds.
No associates, has He. I was commanded this and I am the first of the Muslims."

Sura Anam, Verse 162 & 163

These statements of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) reflect true Tawhid in practice.

II. POLYTHEISM

Polytheism is the opposite of monotheism. In Islamic terms we refer to it as *Shirk*. Just as Tawhid is of two kinds, so is Shirk i.e. theoretical and practical.

i. Theoretical Shirk

This belief in God is outside the boundaries set by Tawhid and thus can be called a wrong understanding of God. Theoretical Polytheism is likewise divided into, Shirk in essence and Shirk in actions.

A. Shirk in Essence:

This is belief in more than one separate god. The belief in two and three gods is referred to as dualist-shirk and trinity-shirk respectively. Shirk in the essence of God is the opposite of Tawhid in His essence.

B. Shirk in Actions:

This is an expounded version of Shirk in Essence whereby a person believes that different things were created and are controlled by different deities/powers e.g. that good things were made by God and bad things were made by a devil or demon, or that the god of the sea is different from that of the sun!

ii. Practical Shirk

Again this is the exact opposite of practical Tawhid and involves a person who submits himself in worship to others beside the Almighty. In Islam, when we speak of worship we do not mean only physical prostration but it is an expression of submission and obedience towards something. Therefore, whenever we surrender ourselves to the power of something or somebody, we will have worshipped him and taken him to be our God.

To abandon practical shirk, a person must set himself free from obedience to anyone other than God and then should succumb to what God is commanding

Hidden and Clear Shirk

When a person obviously and openly believes in several gods then his polytheism is distinct or clear. In this case, he is totally outside the borders of Islam.

However, there exist levels of shirk that may not be as clear and transparent as that mentioned above. These hidden traits of polytheism do not result in a total abandonment of Tawhid and Islam. For example, when a person follows his carnal desire against God's command or greedily seeks wealth, he engages in this hidden form of shirk.

Thus deviation from pure Tawhid is possible if one is not careful and can express itself in theory or practical form. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has recommended great sensitivity and accuracy in approaching the subject of Tawhid. He has warned us saying:

"To discover Shirk in the hearts of people is more difficult than finding a small black ant, passing on a smooth black stone, in the darkest hours of the night."

How devious this Shirk is! From this hadith, we understand the importance of being always aware of what we believe and accept.

Sura Ikhlas, which has been given great importance in Islamic teachings, is based on Tawhid and the belief in one God. It says:

" In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful
Say: He God is (only) One.

God is He Whom all depend on.
He begot not nor is He begotten
And none is like Him."

Sura Ikhlas, Verses 1-4

The word *Ikhlas* means Sincerity and is further explained to mean purity in the belief of one God. Reciting it with earnestness is a way of removing any stain of polytheism that may have tainted our hearts and that is why we are encouraged to do often.

The lessons taught to us by Prophets (a.s.) – and especially the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) – are also concerned with ways in which we can purify our faith and stay away from polytheism. Although the path towards true Tawhid is not easy and requires effort on our part, we can achieve our goal as long as we are determined to do so and rely on Allah (S.W.T.) to guide us.

LESSON 9

THE EFFECT OF FAITH IN LIFE

When a person truly declares his belief in God, the effects of this faith cannot be confined to one or a few specific instances in his life. The belief that God is creator of the entire universe consequently affects all areas of his life and influences his choices and decisions. It sets out a path for him to follow in order to conform to this faith.

Let us look at a few areas that the belief in One God influences in a persons life. There are many and perhaps after reading this chapter, you will be able to research and find the others.

1] Idleness

The word idle can be used to describe two states that have different meaning in the picture of life:

a) That first is when a person has no specific goal in life. His existence is then considered useless, because what gives meaning to the life of a man is the aim he has to achieve.

b) The second would refer to a state that is not individual like the one above but covers mankind as a whole. Those who do not believe in God, as a consequence do not believe that man has a noble aim to achieve and that he will be accountable for his actions one day. In such a persons opinion, man is here to live life to its fullest and enjoy the luxuries of the world with no thought of what is to come in the hereafter. Such a person believes that humanity came into existence for an idle purpose i.e. no defined purpose at all.

Comparing this second state of idleness with the state of those who do believe in God, we see that the latter not only believe that man has an aim but that all of creation has a role to fulfill and is significant in some way to the Plan of God. Such people then set out to discover these goals, with the help of divine Books and Messengers, and then to attain them. The ultimate goal is the attaining eternal bliss and closeness to Divine Mercy.

For those who do not believe in God or have a distorted faith, the only way to live is to create worldly goals whenever they find a chance. Following success, wealth, family, material happiness, reputation and the like, they believe that they will succeed in fulfilling their aim in life. It is clear though, that such goals have nothing to do with the true aim of life and they only succeed in taking man away from his real purpose.

Any happiness that a person feels he has as a result of achieving worldly success is a false one and will last only as long as this temporary world. Many others find themselves still searching for more even after they attain their aims because it does not satisfy their inner needs.

2] Spiritual tranquility

Obtaining spiritual tranquility is amongst the most important effects that faith has on a person. We know that it is in man's disposition to believe in God. His nature searches to fulfill this need and he is not fully and completely satisfied until he realizes his quest. Once he achieves this state of faith, he finds himself free of anxiety. Achieving other goals may appease the desire for a while but will not replace the actual need. Only when a man finds God and develops a spiritual connection with Him, does he find satisfaction and comfort in his inner self.

On the other hand, a person who does not believe in God will naturally concentrate of fulfilling his need with the glamour of this world. This will eventually cause him to be troubled by the things he has and their possible loss and about things he cannot have but desires. Such a person will never gain peace in his life.

The Holy Qur'an cautions those who live aloof from the Almighty and says:
" Whosoever turns away from Me will indeed face a hard life."

Sura Taha, Verse 124

It is important to note that such people will always remain anxious, impatient and in despair.

A believer on the other hand is a free spirit who lives only to gain the favours of the Almighty. His soul is constantly in communication with his Lord and finds peace in this remembrance of his Beloved. The Qur'an confirms this saying:
" Only through remembrance of Allah (S.W.T.) do hearts become tranquil."
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In another verse, Allah (S.W.T.) tells us:
"He it is, Who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the Faithful that they might add further faith to their faith; and Allah (S.W.T.)'s are the hosts of the Heavens and the earth and Allah (S.W.T.) is All-Knowing, All-wise."
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From all this, we can conclude that faith and spiritual peace are connected and that tranquility of the soul can only be achieved by strengthening our Imaan (Faith), as Allah (S.W.T.) has told us in His Book.

3] Responsibility

A person who firmly believes in God realizes that He is monitoring all his actions. He knows that he will be held accountable for his deeds – both minor and major.

When one understands the concept of life in this manner, then he naturally feels obliged to perform his responsibilities. A person who truly professes

faith in one God cannot free himself from a code of conduct and the duties that come with it.

Belief in Allah (S.W.T.) means that a person acknowledges His Favours and Mercy on him and feels that he is answerable to Him. Such a Believer finds Freedom in the sense that he is free to do the right thing i.e. follow the principles set down by his Lord. He becomes responsible in his attitude, lifestyle etc. and is a stable character who can be relied on to do what is right under any circumstance.

A person who does not believe in God ends up becoming a slave to his own desires. While searching for freedom, he finds himself caught in the trap of lust and greed and unable to make the decision to stay away from such evil. They may speak of human rights, oppression and sympathy but their slogans are empty and superficial. In depth, they hold no foundation and crumble at the slightest challenge. Responsibility does not come naturally to these people as it does to the Believer.

4] Training the Self

Faith in One God does not only affect the individual as shown in the three examples above, but also spreads to the society. It helps to create an atmosphere of harmony in social life. Belief in Allah (S.W.T.), creates feelings of concern, compassion and care between human beings.

In the countries that have abandoned God, we see the moral decay that eats away at their core. Violation of human rights, crimes, suicides, heartache, loneliness, broken families, abuse, all this and more is abundant in such communities. People lead selfish lives, putting themselves first before anyone else and searching to satisfy their personal desires at any cost – even that of others.

Individuals within these communities have begun to realize that their members are losing basic humanity and compassion. Some have written about the moral decadence as a *plague* – corrupt and destructive, blaming it on a widespread loss of spiritual values.

While a Believer finds solidity in his faith and can overcome all problems with the help of fellow brothers, a disbeliever is reduced to being overwhelmed by the smallest difficulty and finds himself having to seek help from strangers in the form of psychiatrists and counselors – and that even at a fee!

5] Social – Political Effects

We have discussed and mentioned that faith in Tawhid is not restricted to the physical act of prostration. It also extends to the aspects of submission and obedience.

In a society where Tawhid is not fully practiced i.e. where faith is weak, we find that one group of people may feel superior to another and try and rule over them. This is the beginning of oppression and goes against the grain of monotheism. Such power-seekers are referred to as *Taaghoot*.

Tawhid rids a society of such evil because all its members submit to one Power only and that is God. Knowing that only He has the right to rule and command makes them all equal. This was the aim of Islam through the ages, to create such an equal and harmonious society throughout the world. The Qur'an says:
"And certainly, We have raised in every nation an apostle saying: 'Serve Allah and shun the Devil…"

Sura Nahl, Verse 36

This was why the prophets sent by Allah (S.W.T.) were rejected. People were so used to their power over others that they did not like the message of equality. This system though, provides the perfect foundation for a prosperous nation. Its citizens can concentrate on development, as they are not distracted by greed for wealth or power. Knowing that they are all equal, they can work side by side without hostility and in fact with harmony and co-operation since they will be striving towards the same goal.

Having discussed some of the positive effects that faith in God has on an individual and the society as a whole, we are in a position to confidently say that belief and action go hand in hand and the former cannot be present without the latter.

Those who claim to be Believers but show no effects of their faith in their lives are either pretending to have Imaan or are weak in their belief. It is for this reason that the Qur'an mentions "*those who believe and do good deeds*" in one sentence, showing that the one is the result of the other.

According to Imam Ali ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.),
"Belief means appreciation with the heart, acknowledgement with the tongue and action with the limbs."

This saying sums up the conditions of faith beautifully, leaving no doubt that it must encompass all aspects of human nature.

Belief and action complement each other in that belief shows itself in action while sincerity of action strengthens belief. Nurturing either or both elements makes it possible for a person to truly perfect his faith.

LESSON 10
CHARACTER BUILDING

There is no doubt that character building plays a very significant role at both individual and society levels. If a civilization tries to advance technologically without also building on its morals and conduct, it will be like trying to construct a building on sand, the slightest shift would cause the entire structure to crumble.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what we are doing in today's times. Moral decadence is everywhere. Drugs, alcohol, lust, dysfunctional families and crimes are words that have become common in our daily vocabulary.

Apart from being dangers to themselves and their societies, people are becoming a danger to countries around them. The strong feed on the weak and the rich on the poor. A common example is the prevailing situation of poverty, hunger and disease that attacking most Third world countries. While the richer nations are capable of solving the issues once and for all, they only make a show of offering help and then leave the dying people to fend for themselves.

Albert Einstein saw the sign of these dire circumstances long before they became evident. He is quoted as having said:
"The modern and civilized world with the advancement of industrialization, instead of serving human beings and societies have in fact destroyed the roots of humanity …"

A Peaceful Life

In order to understand why Islam puts such an emphasis on self-building and perfecting ones Akhlaq, it is necessary to look at our society and community. The environment around us at home, at work, in school and even on our streets can only be peaceful if every person behaves in a moral and polite manner.

When people do not struggle to have good conduct then they will begin to fight with each other for petty reasons. Selfishness will lead to pride, inconsideration and greed. A community whose members do not respect each other is a community based on hostility and animosity. It is a destructive environment and has no hope for progressing.

Imagine a community where you can trust others to keep your secrets, where you can rely on many for help and support, where you are treated as an individual and your opinion is respected and upheld. Now imagine the opposite. This is the difference between a truly Islamic society and one that has abandoned Allah (S.W.T.).

Balance in Desires

Allah (S.W.T.) created a variety of desires in the human nature and as such He also provided for them. In order to live a healthy life, we need to fulfill these desires when they arise and there is nothing wrong in doing so.

We must, however, maintain a balance in our lives and it is for this reason that Allah (S.W.T.) has, in His infinite Knowledge, also set certain parameters within which these desires can be indulged. This is to prevent man from either depriving himself of them or oppressing himself under their demand.

The boundaries for all actions are defined by 5 terms in Islam:
1. Wajib (Compulsory)
2. Haraam (Forbidden)
3. Mustahab (Recommended)
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5. Mubah (Permissible)

Going beyond the imitations set by Allah (S.W.T.) is a sin and affects our spiritual balance negatively.

Amongst the people who have not recognized the true faith of Allah (S.W.T.), a great confusion arises in regards to the desires available and how to satisfy them.

One group believes that the only way to reach the Almighty is to detach oneself from this world and their nature. They live in seclusion and deny themselves all normal needs such as proper eating and sleeping, companionship of friends and family, sexual needs etc. For them, staying away from these things and immersing oneself in meditation and worship is the only way to gain success in the hereafter.

The other extreme are those people whom we have discussed before – the materialistically inclined. These individuals believe that life is to be lived with all desires being satisfied without second thought. Instead of learning to control the desires and channeling them constructively, they indulge in them excessively and at the cost of their character.

Islam supports neither the first view nor the second. Instead it teaches us that we can satisfy our desires but within limits and in moderation. The rules that are set upon these needs allow us to control our desires rather than our desires to control us.

Developing the Soul

The soul is easily influenced by our environment and actions if not guarded carefully. We have discussed that it possible – and not very difficult – for a monotheist to find himself committing a form of indistinct shirk with only a little change in his character or ideas. Developing this further, we can also say that through our actions, our soul either strengthens or weakens.

When a person first commits a bad deed, his soul may feel regret since it is in the nature of human beings to rebel against evil but the same deed committed again and again desensitizes the soul and it hardens. When it is used to the sin, it will

no longer feel that something wrong is being done, let alone experience regret or guilt!

On the other hand, a person who guards against sins and performs good, strengthens his soul. When he sins and feels guilty, he immediately repents and tries never to repeat the act. Such a soul grows solid in its foundation and becomes healthier with every right choice.

The development of a soul begins from infancy in the laps of a mother and continues to be influenced by the home environment, school, work and society. This is why we must be very careful what we expose ourselves and our children to in this world.

Self-Control in Youth

In the beginning of this text we spoke of the period of youth and its importance in a person's life. It is the time when characters are made or destroyed and thus an extremely sensitive issue. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has said:
"A person who obeys Allah (S.W.T.) in youth compared to those who worship in old age is like comparing the prophets to the ordinary people."

What a noble position a pious youth holds in the eyes of Allah (S.W.T.)! how great his status!

This hadith should prompt the youth to strive even harder to attain such a rank. Remember, when you grow old, you lose this opportunity that is reserved for the youth. Seeking forgiveness for all ones wrong-doing and setting out determined to stick to the Right Path is the first step in this journey. When a person realizes the true benefits of self-control and Islam, this decision becomes an easy one to make.

While there are many distractions that a young person has to fight against when walking on the straight path, the biggest of these is perhaps that of physical desire. This is the temptation that has been known to destroy the best period in life of many, many young people. It is also the tool used by oppressors to weaken the strength of those they want to overpower.

By introducing lust into a community and concentrating on exposing the youth to it, many a cunning power has achieved its aim and distracted the community from rebelling. Giving in to lust has the effect of reducing the dignity and honour of an individual and leaving him with no self-respect to stand up for.

How does Islam deal with this issue?
As we said earlier in this lesson, Islam has set down boundaries for human beings in regards to wants and this includes physical desires. While Islam recognizes that sexual needs must be met by a human being, it lays down the following rules concerning it:

1. These desires can only lawfully be fulfilled within the bond of marriage. Involving oneself in sexual activities outside of marriage is forbidden and will likely have negative effects on both the individuals in question and the society.

2. For those who are not married, self-control is the essence of their struggle. These people must place their trust in Allah (S.W.T.) and have a strong faith that they are doing what is right. By abstaining from indulging in sexual activities until they are married, they ensure that their souls remain pure and clean from such a vice as lust.

3. Islam has controlled the interaction of men and women in the society. Men and women are commanded to respect each other in their manners and to instill within themselves the Love for Allah (S.W.T.) first and foremost. When this love is well established then fighting against ones desires becomes easy because they take second priority to Him. On the other hand, men and women are also instructed not to have any kind of physical contact (except for certain relatives) with each other. Men are not supposed to look women lustfully and neither are women supposed to invite such looks. When such a level of respect exists within a society then the value of both genders is raised in the eyes of the other and there is no question of stooping to make a person the object of another's lust. With the removal of temptation, the situation is controlled more easily.

Chastity and Simplicity
Expounding on the last point, we can say that in order to make it easier for men and women to control their desire, Islam has set up a mode of dressing, walking, talking and basically associating with the opposite gender.

The Holy Qur'an says :
"And say to the Believing women that they cast down their gaze and guard their private parts and display not their adornment save what is apparent of it; and to draw their veils over their bosoms …"

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According to Islamic Sheriat, women must cover themselves when in the presence of Na-Mahram men, in a modest manner that will not invite or attract attention. They may leave their face and hands exposed as long as these are not decorated i.e. with makeup and excessive jewelry.

Imam Khomeini (May the Almighty be pleased with his soul) in his book of laws says:
"Women should avoid any kind of dressing that can provoke (attract) men. To wear the chadar is highly recommended."

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Philosophy of Hijaab
Upholding modesty through the observation of Hijaab has the following effects on society:

1. *Prevention of corrupt conduct*
   Through keeping up the barriers imposed by hijaab, both men and women will be saved from adopting conduct that is immoral and corrupt. Uncontrolled lust will not exist in such an environment and responsibility will prevail.

2. *Security for women*
   When some women and men become immoral in a society then all women are at risk. A man who cannot respect the chastity and sanctity of a woman will give in to his desires and expect any woman to fulfill them for him. All women in that community face the threat and this can be seen especially in the West where abuse of this kind against women is so abundant that it can no longer be controlled by the law. Hijaab secures the dignity and modesty of women and of the men around them.

3. *Status of Women*
   It is a common complaint in the West and other non-Islamic countries that women have a lower status in society than men. Women are complaining that they are being treated as objects and not as intelligent individual. This is a result of the picture they present to the society. When a women dresses and speaks in seductive manner, then she will obviously be viewed a source of such pleasures.

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Although this is an aspect that is not commonly advertised, it is nonetheless amongst the most important effects that hijaab has on a community. Bu observing modesty and keeping wayward desires under check, the productivity levels of a society – both in social and working environments – increases drastically. Instead of being distracted by thoughts of how to impress or attract each other, the men and women can concentrate fully on the work at hand and increase output.

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   By observing hijaab, a woman becomes a symbol of respect and dignity. Not only will her self respect increase but her value in the eyes on men also increases. Because she represents a person who is serving Allah (S.W.T.) above all else, her principles and stand in life are clear for all to see.

Does Hijaab restrict Freedom?
Of course, despite all that has been said, the accusation that arises most often is that Hijaab inhibits the freedom that a women has by forcing her to conform to it limits.

Firstly, we must understand that it is the responsibility of an individual to behave in a manner that will harm neither his self nor those surrounding him, and that he should attempt to do what will benefit them. Much as we would like to believe that the choice to do something is entirely ours, this is not true. Every act that we perform affects those around us and we must consider them before we decide what to do.

Freedom is not the right to do as you wish but the responsibility to live your life without infringing on another persons privileges. Islam is not against human rights rather it promotes them. Hijaab, however, is a responsibility that must be upheld by individuals within a society if that society is to prosper.

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LESSON 11
FRIENDSHIP

One of the emotional needs of a human being is that of companionship or friendship. A friend is a person with whom you have a strong bond based on love. Two good friends become pillars of support for each other, helping each other, sharing problems and providing sympathy, understanding and affection for each other. They become assets in the each other's lives.

Without friends, a human being is destined to live a life of solitude. Emptiness fills the heart of such a person and he finds himself alone in times of need. The emotional burden involved is great and is recognized as pitiful by all people.

Islam as a complete code of life, recognizes this need for friends and encourages it followers to not only maintain cordial relations with all people but to also seek and develop constructive friendships with those who connect with us on an emotional level.

Friendships should be developed from childhood and youth. A friend influences you in many ways and therefore the kind of company you keep is extremely important. You will have realized that friend is someone special on whom you have a deeper trust then your other acquaintances. Friends tend to share ideas, opinions, likes and dislikes. They enjoy and prefer each other's company above all else, and as their friendship grows, so does their respect and love for each other. Because of this strong emotional attachment, a friend may also influence and sway the opinions or decisions that the other makes. People have made decisions that affect their entire lives based on the advice of a friend and it is for this reason that Islam tell us to be careful in our choice of companions.

It best to have friends who think like you and who possess good qualities that you can hope to adopt from them. If you choose a pious and principled friend, chances are that he or she will give you good advice when you are confused and prevent you from making hasty decisions that you may later regret.

Imam Ali (a.s.) has said:
"Avoid friendship with bad (character) people because you will be affected by them although you may be influenced without your knowledge."

Once you have bonded with a person, it is difficult to realize their faults and chance are that even if someone points them out to you, you will deny it. For this reason, it is recommended to assess the character of a potential friend before you allow yourself to become too close and emotion overrides logic.

We read in many books that a common problem amongst teenagers and youth today is that of *Peer pressure.* This just means the influence that your age-mates have over you. Hundreds of young people adopt vices like drugs, alcohol, smoking etc. only because their friends tell them it is 'cool' to do so. They want to fit in and feel pressured into joining the majority. By the time they want to

stop, they may have wasted years of their life or worse it may be too late to break free of the habit.

Islam deals with this by instructing a youth to be aware of who is and why he exists. Once a young person realizes that his aim in life is to gain the pleasure of Allah (S.W.T.) then the groups and gangs hold no attraction for him and he does not feel the need to be accepted them. In addition to this, he will avoid them because he knows that Islam recommends friends of good morals and character and people with such vices do not make good constructive friends.

The emphasis on the quality of the friend you choose is so great that although isolation is not a pleasing state, many ahadith of our Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Aimmah (a.s.) tell us that in the event of being unable to find a moral friend, one should choose to maintain solitude rather than keep the company of immoral individuals.

First Test then Trust

Friendships built hastily on first impressions can easily collapse at the first sign of problems. Make sure that you first get to *know* the person you want to befriend before trusting him otherwise you may find that the secrets you share with him are exposed to the world.

Talking with people, seeing how they react in different circumstance, how well they associate with others all helps you to assess their character. It has been mentioned in ahadith that if you observe that a person has reason to be angry and maintains his composure at such a time, doing this on three separate occasions then he deserves to be a friend. Of course this is only one admirable quality and friendship must be based on others in addition to this.

Imam Ali (a.s.) has said:
“Whoever chooses his friend after knowing him will be able to continue the friendship (i.e. it will last)”

I. Seeking a Friend

We have spoken of the good moral character that a friend should possess but let us also emphasize that the person we choose must also be spiritually and emotionally inclined towards Allah (S.W.T.). There are plenty of people – non-Muslims, Polytheists and even Atheists – who have good manners and loyal characters but the spiritual influence such people would have close friends is destructive to our Imaan.

Sometimes a person who has been deprived of affection and love in his family may latch onto the first individual who offers him this warmth. Such a step may cause him more harm than good if the person he befriends takes him away from Allah (S.W.T.). Remember to ask yourself if such or similar emotions are prompting you to make a friend who is otherwise unsuitable for you.

A true friend is one you can trust to always warn you when you stray away from Allah (S.W.T.) and who will walk upright with you on the Path towards ultimate success.

A. Qualities to look for

Because Allah (S.W.T.) has created the human nature and the feeling of friendship between people, He is also the Best suited to advise us on how to recognize a person who will make a good friend. Therefore, we have been told to look for these qualities in a potential friend:

1. **Wisdom and Knowledge:**
   A friend must be Aaqil (wise) according to Islam. Those who are not wise may through their ideas and action harm you and put your dignity at risk together with their own.
   Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) advised his son saying:
   “ Avoid friendship with an ignorant person because he may want to benefit you but because of his ignorance, he will end up harming you.”

   Islam cautions us to avoid friendship with characters who are rash, unreasonable, short tempered and unstable in their emotions. When in school or college, it is a good idea to avoid those who do not take their studies seriously no matter how popular they are. Remember, after you leave the school each of you will go your own way and how you perform your studies will affect the rest of your life and career. Ask yourself whether failing will be worth the few hours of popularity you may have.

2. **Sincerity and Good Principles.**
   The person you choose to befriend should be sincere in his actions and uphold the principles of Islam. If he is the sort of person who compromises his relationship with Allah (S.W.T.) then what is to say that he would not compromise your relationship which is infinitely less important when compared to Him?

   A principled friend will know his duties to you and respect and uphold both because you are a fellow brother and because you are a friend. His loyalty will be unquestionable.

3. **Pleasant Character**
   A pleasant character is a most appealing quality in an individual. Someone who is kind, gentle, polite, faithful, reliable and fun to be with is usually the description most people will give of a friend.

   It is advisable to seek friends who are good company to be with and with whom you can enjoy the time you spend together. You should share some common interests if your friendship is to survive.

Of course all this does not mean that you should only search for a perfect person to be friends with. It may be impossible to find someone who has all these good qualities and noble attributes and we must be realistic in our assessment of people. These criteria only serve to give us guideline on what we should look out for and what qualities we should incorporate in *ourselves* if we are to be good friends also.

Our 6th Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) has said:
"A good friend gives comfort to the spirit of a human being and grants him success in this world and in the hereafter, just as cool water quenches the thirst of a parched throat."

We should strive to be like this cool water to our friends if we expect them to the same for us.

B. Qualities to Avoid

Just as there are certain basic good manners we should search for in our friends, so we must avoid both befriending those with the following bad qualities and having these qualities ourselves.

1. **Selfishness**
   A selfish person will always think of himself before you. He will do whatever benefits him without thinking of its consequence on you and such a person does not deserve to have friends.
   Our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has said of such people:
   "There is no good in a person who does not like for you what he likes for himself."

2. **Pride**
   People who are proud can never be true friends because they will always think themselves as being superior than you. They will look down upon you and your ideas if these disagree with their views and try to demean you.

   Such a friendship will have no equality or loyalty in it since the proud person will believe they are always right and will think that they are doing you a favour by being your friend.

3. **Wickedness**
   People who cannot control themselves and who commit sins constantly without hesitation are on a downward spiral towards self-destruction. Avoid them or else you might find yourself caught up in the flow and unable to escape.

   These people bring nothing into a friendship except empty promises and negative influences. Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s.) has warned us:
   " Such wicked people are similar to a poisoned sword which looks beautiful but leaves behind a harmful (dangerous) influence."

4. **Gossip**
We have been warned to avoid friendship with gossips as they can speak about us and disclose our secrets to others just as easily as they tell us about other peoples affairs.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) has said:
"Keep aloof from slanderers because those who speak ill of others in front of you may one day speak ill of you to others."

In this group of gossips are also included liars, flatterers, traitors, misers and those who have a rude manner and speak in abusive language.

II. Duties of a Friend

Having described the qualities we should look for and avoid in a friend, let us know look at the relationship of friends and see what duties Islam has laid down to ensure that a friendship is as equal and beneficial to both parties involved as possible. Some of these duties include:

1. **Respecting each others rights**
It is necessary for a person to consider his friend as an extension of himself. He must like for him what he likes for himself and the same with his dislikes. Misusing the friendship and taking advantage of a friend's emotional or physical rights is not encouraged.
In his Wasiyat (Will), Imam Ali (a.s.) said to his son Imam Hassan (a.s.):
"Do not take advantage of the rights of your brother by misusing the name of friendship because this can ultimately lead to loosing him as a friend. By taking advantage of his rights, your brother in faith will no longer remain your brother."

One of the definite rights of a friend over you is that you respect his opinions. While there may be no barriers in your friendship, this respect must be maintained. As long as your friend is acting according to Islam, you should not ridicule his ideas.

Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) says:
"As it is the duty of your friend to respect you, it is also your duty to respect him."

2. **Extending a helping hand**
The adage "A friend in need is a friend indeed" goes perfectly with what Islam advises in a friendship. A friend should be the kind of person who is always willing to help you in anyway possible even it is with providing a sympathetic ear. In turn, you too should be willing to sacrifice time, energy and finance to help a friend.

3. **Do not demand**

Speaking of the aspect of sacrifice, we must realize that while we can ask for help and support from a friend, we should not impose our needs on them. Expecting too much or demanding more than your friend can conveniently offer is a sign of selfishness.

4. **Being Loyal**

Loyalty is the glue that holds a friendship together. It is what supports a relationship through thick and thin. To be a true friend, you must be loyal. It goes without saying this does not mean that you should put your loyalty to your friend above your loyalty to Allah (S.W.T.).

Once, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was walking and came across an old man. He stopped to greet him ad inquired about his health. When his companions saw this, they asked him why he had treated the strange man in this manner. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) replied, *"When Khadija was alive, this man used to visit us."* He continued by saying that one of the signs of Imaan is to respect one's old friends.

As a conclusion to the duties of a friend let us study a hadith of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) where he says:

" There are certain conditions to being a good friend. Whoever qualifies in all of them is indeed considered to be a noble companion and whosoever does not qualify in even one of them cannot be considered a true friend. They are:

a) His interior (character) and exterior (actions) should be the same i.e. he should not be a hypocrite.

b) He should be able to evaluate your goodness as his own goodness and your faults as his own faults.

c) If he attains more power, wealth or status, he attitude towards you should not change.

d) Whatever your friendship requires, he should try his utmost to give to it.

e) He should not abandon you in times of difficulty."

III. Limits in Friendship

As in all things in Islam, friendship too must have its moderate boundaries. Exceeding these may lead to regret if things don't work out. Every friendship must be based on rational thought. Getting carried away by our emotions – which may very easily happen especially in youth – leads us to do foolish things.

The following three things should be avoided in any friendship:

1. **Excessive Trust**

We discussed earlier that when selecting a friend, we must first test the character of person and then trust them. When we take this second step, however, we must do it gradually and with care. No matter how much we observe a person before becoming close to them, we can never know them fully.

Trust must come in small things first and then more delicate issues. And even then, Islam advises never to tell EVERYTHING to a friend. You do not what the future holds for you and it possible that if your friend knows your deepest secret, he may use them against you in anger or that your friendship may break and he may use the information against you in spite.

Keep your innermost secrets between yourself and your Lord because you cannot trust anyone as much as Him. Imam Ali (a.s.) says:
"Show all kindness to your friend but do not show him full trust. Assist him as much as you can but do not reveal all your secrets to him."

2. Fanaticism

It is easy to be blind to the faults of a good friend. We should take great care not to fall into this trap. All humans are imperfect and just as we recognize that we are not perfect, we must also realize that our friends too possess flaws. While we should not hunt for the weaknesses of our friends, we cannot ignore them and pretend they do not exist – especially when they are in regards to morals and Islamic principles.
Imam Ali (a.s.) has warned us:
"Loving something (one) makes you blind and deaf (to its faults)."

In another hadith of the Aimmah (a.s.) we are told: *"A believer is a mirror to his fellow being."* This basically means that we must reflect to our friends what hey are to us and when they fall short we must be there to warn them and help them up. We should expect the same of them.

Friends are complements, helping each other to reach perfection and making the task easier by providing companionship. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has said: *"Two good friends are like a pair of hands; as they wash, they clean each other."*

On the other hand, we should also not try to expose the faults of our friends or their shortcomings to others. During the absence of a friend do not speak ill or ridicule him. Harith ibn Awar once came to Imam Ali (a.s.) and said, "O Ameerul Mo'mineen! I am your friend!" Imam (a.s.) then explained a few things a person must abstain from in a friendship. These are:

- Do not dispute with or be hostile towards a friend.
- Do not ridicule him.
- Do not quarrel with him.
- Do not crack indecent jokes with him.
- Do not consider him to be lower than yourself.

3. Excessive Attachment

Friendship bonds formed in youth (and especially between females) usually tend be extremely strong. This is due to excessive loyalty and attachment. It should be avoided because it can have harmful effects on one or both parties e.g.

- Concentrating on the friendship may distract the friends from other important issues like school work, family responsibilities, wajibaats etc.
- If one friend is more attached than the other and the feelings are not equally reciprocated then that person may end up emotionally effected.
- Being obsessed with a friend makes a person more easily influenced and thus he looses the ability to make logical and unbiased decisions on his own.

The only solution to this is to have a moderate and realistic friendship. Imam Ali (a.s.) in one of his sermons says:
"Your friendship with your friend should be within the limits of moderation because it is possible that one day that friend may become your enemy."

LESSON 12
AKHLAQ OF THE HOLY PROPHET (s.a.w.w.)
Part I

When trying to instill morals in a person, it is necessary to present a role model who can be followed. Without such a practical example, akhlaq (etiquette) is just a set of theories that written down in books.

In secular systems, such models do not exist. No human is perfect and as such there in nobody who can be looked up to and followed as an example or moral excellence. This makes it difficult for such systems to encourage or convince its followers to strive towards good conduct.

Divine schools of thought are the opposite and rely on their guides as examples of perfect conduct. In Islam, this guide is the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) whom the Holy Qur'an calls **Uswatun – Hassanah** (The Perfect Example). It says:
" Indeed there is for you an apostle from Allah (S.W.T.), an excellent role model."
Sura Ahzaab, Verse 21

Having such a perfect example as a model to follow, allows Muslims to ignore the false leaders and to lead a life directed at achieving the perfect character. If we do not study the life of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and his seerah, we risk the danger of not being able to differentiate between tradition, culture and Islam. It is this lack of knowledge and interest that leads people astray and causes them to commit wrong doings in the name of Islam.

We must study the life and sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and try our best to follow it as well as we can. It is impossible to fully appreciate his flawless character and equally impossible to achieve the state of perfection that he had either morally or spiritually. We must however, try to emulate his manners because if we succeed in adopting even a minute aspect of his personality into our own then we will find ourselves above all others in this world and on the road towards success.

Using Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.)'s life as our example and source, let us study some of the akhlaq that we should attempt to have in our individual and social lives. We will deal with the individual aspect in this chapter and the social in the next.

A. Individual Morals

1. Prayers

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was often heard to say, *"My happiness is in prayers."*
One day, while sitting with his companions, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) asked them that if they lived near a river where they could go and bathe five times day, would any dirt remain upon their bodies? They all answered to the negative. Hearing this, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) then told them, *"Five times a day, through*

Salaat, Allah (S.W.T.) purifies a persons soul, washing away all diseases of the Nafs and removing all stains of sin."

In another incident, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) entered the mosque and noticed a man praying, who was careless in his performance of Ruku and Sajdah. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) watched him and then said that if the man died not having corrected this flaw, he would not die a Muslim.

Another famous hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) regarding Salaat is as follows:
"Prayer is like a pillar of a fortress. If the pillar is firm, the whole fortress will stand upright but if the pillar breaks then the entire structure would collapse."

Thus, we can say that pillar is a foundation of our relationship with Allah (S.W.T.) and every other aspect is based on it.

A final hadith regarding the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) will perhaps drive home the true status of prayer in the life of a Muslim. One of the wives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) says:
"The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) used to converse with us but as soon as the time for prayer dawned, he would change as though he did not recognize us and hatily proceed towards Salaat. When he stood for prayer, the colour of his face would become pale in awe of Allah (S.W.T.). Humility and fear would reflect on his expression and he would stand for hours on end, praying, reciting du'a and munajaat."

2. <u>Hard work</u>

Since his childhood, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) was a very active person. When he was still with his foster mother – Halima – he once saw her other sons going out and asked her, "Where are my brothers going?" Halima explained that they were going to graze the sheep and the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) immediately insister that he wanted to join them. After that he would go out often and graze the sheep with them.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had no respect for people who chose to be idle despite having the capability to work. A group of his companions once came across the following words in the Holy Qur'an:
"Whoever obtains piety, Allah will open ways for him to solve his problems and bless him with sustenance."

Upon reading this, they all stopped working and began to concentrate on praying. When the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) heard of this, he asked them why they had done such a thing and the companions answered that it was because of the ayat they had read. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said to them:
" Whoever sits idle and does not perform his duties, Allah (S.W.T.) will not even accept his dua and salaat. Work hard and while working place your trust in Him, then he will give you blessings and rizq from that effort." He looked at the

companions and added, *“ Whoever is lazy in striving for his worldly life will surely be more lazy in striving for his hereafter.”*

In another hadith, our Prophet (s.a.w.w.) says:
“Worship has 70 parts and the best of them is seeking a lawful livelihood.”

Another story that shows us the importance of hard work is when the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was sitting with his companions and they happened to see a young man busy working in the early hours of the morning. The companions watched him and commented on how beneficial it would be if he put his effort in worshipping Allah (S.W.T.) instead. When he heard this, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said to them:
“ Do not say that! Because he is working to be independent and self sufficient, it is in the way of Allah (S.W.T.). Even if he were striving to earn a living in order to support his family, it would still be a noble act. It is only when a person takes pride in his efforts and money that he is working in way of Shaytan.”

Our Aimmah (a.s.) followed the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and worked extremely hard themselves to set an example for the people. They valued it so much that Imam Ali (a.s.) used to say, *“There is no joy better than hard work.”*

3. Simplicity

One of the most outstanding qualities of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was his simplicity. He lived in the most basic of houses and his food and dress were minimal at best.

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) neither coveted luxuries, nor did he accept them from others. At all times he preferred to live an uncomplicated life and advised his companions to do the same.

Although towards the end of his life, he was in essence a King over the Muslim Empire, his lifestyle never changed in the slightest. He expected no great tributes from his followers and never rode while those around him were walking. It was his aim to make no one feel uncomfortable or awed in his presence just because of his status.

Once, when some of his wives complained that they were tired of having no luxuries and wanted a greater share of the war booty, he politely explained to them that he lived a simple life and could not do this. He told them living in such a manner was best in the eyes of Allah (S.W.T.) but if they did not think they could bear it then he was willing to give them back their mahr and part with them amicably. This shows that he was not willing to be swayed from his principles even for his family.

Our Aimmah (a.s.) also lead simple lives. Note that Islam does not advocate poverty – only simplicity. Money can be used to help the poor and in ways to help the Muslim Ummah and Islam.

Finally, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was heard to say:
"The most successful person amongst the Believers in the one who expects less in life and is steadfast in prayer."

4. Cleanliness

As we have said, the simplicity of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was not equal to poverty. Now we can add that it was far removed from untidiness either. Rather, he was known for being an extremely neat and clean person. He liked to be well-groomed and presentable at all times.

Once when a man came to visit him, he neatened his clothes before going to greet him. One of his wives, seeing this, asked him why he was doing so when he was the Prophet of Allah (S.W.T.) and had no need to impress others. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) replied, *"Allah (S.W.T.) had recommended highly to the Believers that they be well-dressed and presentable before going to meet with their brethren in faith."*

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) always encouraged his companions to keep themselves clean and their houses tidy and organized. On Fridays especially, he would tell them to perform Ghusl-e-Jumu'ah, dress in good clothes, apply perfume or attar and then proceed to prayers. He himself did this with great pleasure.

He also used to brush his teeth several times a day, including when he woke up, before going to bed and before every prayer. He would say to his companions, *"Remember to keep the paths of Qur'an clean."* And when they asked him what he meant by the paths of Qur'an, he told them that it was their mouths that he referring to. *"How can we do this?"* they asked. *"By brushing your teeth,"* he replied.

These four qualities that we as individuals can adopt are only a few of the excellent habits that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) not only encouraged in others but also possessed himself. As we mentioned in the beginning, it is only by studying his life that we find the others and try to practice them too.

LESSON 13
AKHLAQ OF THE HOLY Prophet (s.a.w.w.)
Part II

We studied some of the examples of personal good habits that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) propagated; let us now discuss morals that he had on a social level i.e. in relation to others.

B. Social Morals

1. Politeness and Loyalty

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) paid great attention in the way he spoke and dealt with other people. He would maintain good relations with all and never forget a friend or anyone who had shown him kindness.

During his stay in Medina, there was a lady who used to sweep the mosque and keep it clean. She was there every day and slept in the mosque at night. On day, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) passed by and did not see her. Asking where she was, he was told that she had died and been buried already. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) was extremely saddened that no one had told him the news and he immediately made his way to the graveyard where he prayed at her grave and asked Allah (S.W.T.) to pardon her sins. His appreciation of her efforts show us that even if we do not people personally, we should still understand how they affect our lives and be grateful for them.

In another incident, Halima, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s foster mother came to meet him many years after he had left her care. When the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) saw her approach, he quickly stood up and spread his cloak for her to walk upon and sit. After showing her great respect, he asked her how she was and when she explained that she and her village were experiencing great drought and famine, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) organized for plenty of food to be taken back with her so that it may ease the burden of the people.

This affection is what made him so endearing to people. They knew that he would nor forget or ignore them once he had befriended them.

2. Humility

The humility of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was so great that Abu Dhar says when strangers would come to visit him, they would not be able to tell him apart from the ordinary people and ask *" Which one is Muhammad?"*

A famous story about humility is one of the poor and rich man who lived in Medina. Once the poor man came to visit the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and sat amongst the group around him. He happened to take a place near a rich man who instinctively moved his fine clothes out of the way. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was not pleased by this action and asked the rich man for its reason. The man had already realized his mistake and he apologized to both the Prophet

(s.a.w.w.) and the poor man offering the latter half of his wealth in compensation.

The poor man accepted his apology but rejected his money. When asked for his reason, he replied: "I fear that by becoming rich I too will behave the way this man did I so not want his money."

3. Forgiveness

Overlooking the mistakes of others and forgiving them was a great quality of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.). He would forgiven not only his friends and Believers but also others who had shown him no kindness.

When he conquered Mecca and entered the city as its ruler, the people were sure that he would take revenge for all the hardships he had suffered at their hands. Yet he stood in front of them and asked them, " What do you expect from me?"

The people knew they were at his mercy and replied, "Nothing except goodness. You are our generous brother and the son of a great brother of ours. Power is in your hands and it is for you to decide how to deal with us."

Hearing this the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was greatly moved and he wept, telling them, "I say to you what my brother Yusuf said to his brothers: 'Go I set you free'."

Many Meccan's accepted Islam after this because they were so impressed by the values and compassion its leader practiced.

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was so kind and forgiving that after he experience the grief caused by the Mushrikeen when they trampled the body of his uncle Hamza in Ohad, he ordered that no Muslim should treat the body of an enemy in the same manner and cause them the same pain.

In matters of Islam, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) excused only those who repented sincerely and changed their ways and to these he showed great forgiveness and gave them hope to expect the same from their Lord.

4. Dealing with people

Although he had come as a guide, mentor and teacher to the people, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) never created any barriers between himself and them. One would expect that being their leader and King, he had every opportunity to keep himself aloof and surround himself with guards and servants but this was not in his character.

As he preached equality to all, he practiced it himself. When people would visit him, he would sit with them and spend time talking to them not only about religion, but also about their lives. Offering encouragement, sympathy

and advice, he gained the love of the general public so that they constantly turned to him for comfort. They knew that he would equally share their laughter and grief.

Many people think that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) concentrated only on preaching laws and fact. What they do not know is that he also spoke of general matters and made jokes with his friends. He lived a normal life as people do but within the limits of Islam and of his dignity.

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was known never to criticize or listen to criticism about people, as he did not want to be prejudiced against anyone. He never chose a particular place in public gatherings but sat where he found space. He was very much saddened by those who spoke ill of others or publicized their shortcomings. One day, he asked his companions, *"Do you know who is the worst amongst men?"*

His companions said yes, they would want to know this so they could avoid the habits of such a person. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) then told them, *"He is the one who creates Fitna and who find faults in God-conscious people."*

We can say that in following the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) we must treat others with the utmost respect and consideration and always be on the lookout to avoid hurting them in any way.

5. Avoid arguing

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) greatly discouraged disputes and squabbles amongst his followers and never indulged in such behaviour himself. One day he passed a group of Muslims who were arguing amongst themselves and he stopped them saying,

"I remind you that many past nations have been destroyed due to squabbles – this ugly act prevented them from progressing. I advise you to disputing amongst yourselves for Allah (S.W.T.) hates this act! Remember, on the Day of Judgement, I will not intercede for such people. After idol-worship, the first prohibited habit was that of quarrelling."

6. Rights of Neighbours

When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was setting off towards Tabuk, he had announced that all those who knew that they had hurt their neighbours at home in anyway should not accompany him. This was the extent to which he disliked such manners. Islam is a religion that came to harbour and nurture harmony amongst people and the most important of our close relations, after family, are our neighbours.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has said:

"Whoever believes in Allah (S.W.T.) and in the Day of Resurrection must respect his neighbours. The right of neighbours upon a person is like the right of a mother upon her children."

In another incident, when his companions spoke highly of a woman who was well known for her fasting and praying, he told them, *"Although she fasts and prays, she will be from the dwellers of the fire of Hell, because someone cannot be a Mo'meen unless he is good to his neighbours…"*

7. Rights of Animals

Cruelty to animals is forbidden in Islam. As much as we treat our fellow humans with respect, we must also handle all other living things with kindness, especially those for whom we are responsible. Allah (S.W.T.) created animals to serve us and provide us with our various needs and we should be grateful for that and treat them well.

There are many incidents where the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) showed this kind of gentleness to animals. On of the famous ones was the time when a cat gave birth to a litter of kittens on one end of his cloak. Instead of chasing them away, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) took a knife and cut off the area they were on, leaving a large piece as blanket for them.

At another time, he was walking when he saw a group of people torturing an animal with a hot iron. He told them to stop straightaway and warned them that those who indulged such inhuman acts were cursed by Allah (S.W.T.).

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) emphasised good treatment of animals by telling his companions the following story.
"One day, a man was travelling in the desert. The heat was extreme and he was very thirsty. Suddenly he came across a well and pleased with his find, he quickly drew up some water and drank it. Having quenched his thirst, he was about to walk away when he noticed a dog nearby who was parched. Thinking that he would help it, he drew up some more water and gave it to the dog to drink. In return for this one act one kindness, Allah (S.W.T.) forgave all his sins!"

The companions were surprised and asked the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), "If we treat animals well, will we be rewarded also?"

He replied, "Yes! For every good action you do, you will certainly be rewarded!"

He then told them that they should be so considerate that even when hunting, they should kill their prey quickly and prevent it from suffering more agony that it already has.

Below are some of the rights that animals have over their owners according to Islam:

a) Animals should always be offered their own kind of food to eat and not be forced to eat what the owner is eating.
b) When travelling, if they reach water, the owner should allow the animal to quench its thirst first.

c) When encouraging an animal to move i.e. beasts of burden then one should not hit it on the face or head.
d) When riders stop to talk to each other, they should dismount so that the beast is not tired by their weight.
e) Animals should not be forced to carry more than they can.
f) The owners should not make their animals walk on rough or uneven ground.

We can see that while societies have begun to fight for the rights of animals in the recent years, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) introduced this over 1400 years ago to his followers!

8. Rights of Human Beings

When Islam has so greatly propagated the rights of animals, do you think that it would ignore those of human beings? Definitely not! Apart from the rights that believers have socially one each other, there are other rights that apply at a more basic level and relate to humanity as a whole. We will briefly mention them below.

It is against the laws of Islam to torture another human being or usurp his rights. Life is sacred in Islam and as such Muslims are not allowed to end another life without justification. When dealing with people, we must especially be considerate when dealing with women, children, old people, the sick and wounded. The honour and chastity of women must be protected at all times.

Another vice that is disliked is that of harming others or the environment through ones actions. Things like pollution, smoking, gossip, loud noises, foul language, inconsiderate driving all fall under the above category.

To a Muslim, a home is a private refuge and should be treated as such. Breaking into peoples houses and violating their privacy is a sin. Violating a person's dignity through ridicule and mockery is also despised and the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has said, *"A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand others are safe."*

He also said, *"Whosoever hurts a Mo'meen hurts me and whosoever hurts me has hurt Allah (S.W.T.) and whosoever hurts Allah (S.W.T.) is indeed cursed by Him, His angels and all people."*

9. Avoid Burdening Others

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) always performed all his own work and even helped out in household chores. He used to say, *"May the curse of Allah (S.W.T.) be upon those who burden others with their own affairs."*

Once the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was travelling with his companions and they stopped by a pool of water to rest and pray at noon. Having left their animals

in the shade, they went to the pond to perform wudhoo. Suddenly, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) left them and walked back to the camels. His companions were surprised by this and thought that perhaps the place did not suit him. They turned to follow him and ask if they should move, when they saw to their surprise that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) reached the shade, tied up his camel and then began walking back towards them.

When he reached them, they asked him why he had taken the trouble to go back when he could have sent anyone of them to tie up his camel for him. He smiled and said, *"Do not seek unnecessary help from your brother even if it is in very small matters."*

This policy was one that he always upheld and encouraged all his followers to also.

We now come to the end of our discussion regarding Akhlaq. We should remind ourselves yet again that these morals and virtues outlined in the past two lessons are only a few guidelines and that our character must incorporate many other finer points in order to reach the stage of perfection for which it was created.

LESSON 14
AKHAM
WHY STUDY THEM?

We know that that Islam is not merely a collection of rituals, a few rules of conduct, and some sayings put together. It is an ideal and reasonable system of life that deals with every aspect of humanity.

Once a person has developed strong faith and conviction, all his actions stem from this faith and become a sign of this inner belief. Yet, despite this, Islam still imposes certain laws upon him. These rules and laws provide a means of understanding Islam better and developing a deeper relationship with Allah (S.W.T.) and a Believer not only pays great attention to carrying them out but also follows them without hesitation.

Where do we Start?

Having already understood why we need to follow Ahkam, the next step is to discover *where* we can find these heavenly rules and laws. We know that Islam encompasses all the available knowledge and its concepts are extensive and diverse. Thus, it is not possible for every Muslim to be able to study and analyse the vast sources of Islamic Laws i.e. Qur'an, sermons, traditions and speeches of the Ma'soomeen (a.s.). For this reason, only some of people dedicate their lives to this study and become professionals in it. These are the *Fuqaha* (Islamic Jurists)

It becomes obligatory on every *Mukkalaf* (One who has attained Buloogh) to follow one of these scholars in matters of jurisprudence. He does this placing his trust in the superior knowledge of his chosen *Marja'e Taqleed.* The ordinary man does not question the scholar in his decisions (unless they obviously go against the Qur'an) and accepts them without doubt.

From the above description of Taqleed (the following of a Marja'e), it is obvious that taqleed is not allowed in matters of belief. Since belief is based on a person being convinced he must ask questions in this area.

We can therefore say that general Islamic beliefs are divided into two:

a) **Usul-e-Deen (Roots of Religion)** which refers to belief in Tawheed (Oneness of God), Adalat (Justice of God), Nubuwwat (Prophethood), Imamat (Successorship) and Ma'ad/Qiyamat (Resurrection/Day of Judgement).
b) **Furu-e-Deen (Branches of Religion)** which consist of the various acts of ebadah that a Muslim must perform.

In matters of Usul, a person can raise any questions he requires answered in order to convince himself of their truth. Taqleed comes in the second group of Furu.

If a person performs his ebadat without following a Marja'e then his actions are considered void. The only exception to this is when he decides to do *ehtiyaat.*

Ehtiyaat may arise in the situation where one mujtahid is of the opinion that an act is haram and another disagrees. The ehtiyaat in this case would be to avoid the act all together. If one is unable to perform ehtiyaat for any reason then one must follow the Marja'e.

Outside of ehtiyaat, any ebadat a person performs without doing taqleed is considered nullified unless he is absolutely sure that he has performed in correctly and according to the fatwa's of the marja'e he was supposed to follow.

Kinds of Taqleed

There are four different kinds of taqleed that can occur:

1) A mujtahid following another mujtahid.
2) An ignorant person following another ignorant person.
3) An aalim (mujtahid) following an ignorant person.
4) An ignorant person following a mujtahid.

The first kind of taqleed is not allowed. By definition, a mujtahid must have enough Ilm at his disposal to be able to understand all the required articles of faith and derive solutions about them if needed. If a mujtahid is so unconfident of his own knowledge and decisions that he finds it necessary to follow other scholars then he is not fit to lead the general ummah.

The second and third kinds of taqleed are only destructive and must be avoided at all times. It is this kind of blind following that led the idol worshippers in the ancient times to tell the prophets sent to them that they would continue in their shirk simply because their fathers before them had done so!

It is worse when an aalim, who can tell the difference between right and wrong, finds himself so blinded by the world that he follows its ignorance. When a Muslim who knows his true purpose in life begins to imitate the ignorant ways of the materialistic world then he is in the third category and is much cursed.

The last definition of taqleed is the only feasible option of the four. It can be likened to a sick person who goes to a doctor for a cure. What we would say of the same person if he went to another sick person for help or to a mechanic? When a person who does not know enough about a certain subject, seeks answers from an expert in the field, he is doing taqleed. In the case of Islam, the Marja'e followed must be both an A'lim (Knowledgeable) and Adil (Just).

Common Terminologies in Taqleed

When we follow a particular marja'e, we do so through the *risaalah* (Articles of Islamic laws) he presents. In his presentation, he explains the Sheriat under a number of classifications. Below is a brief description of each.

I. Fatwa

When a mujtahid gives a *Hukm* (Law) where he knows that there are no doubts about its performance and has not had to resort to ehtiyat, then this law is called a *Fatwa*. For example, when he says that it is waajib to wash ones face, hands and perform masah in wudhoo, then this is a fatwa. Basically, Hukm refers to that law which is definite.

There are 4 ways of obtaining the verdicts of a mujtahid:

i) Hearing it from the mujtahid himself.
ii) When it is quoted from the mujtahid by two Adil (Just) persons.
iii) When it is heard from a person whose honesty you do not doubt.
iv) Reading the mujtahid's book of masa'il (laws) provided you are satisfied by its authenticity and translation.

A marja'e uses four different definitions to define a fatwa. These are :

a) *Strong* meaning the opinion is has a strong foundation i.e. it is a definite fatwa.
b) *Close*, that is, near to the truth. Such a statement will also be considered as fatwa.
c) *Clear* means the opinion is apparent and can be understood from the resources given. It can be justified as fatwa.
d) *Not Distant* which means not very far from truth. Such an opinion can be considered as fatwa also..

II. Ehtiyate – Mustahab

Occasionally, the A'lam Mujtahid observes precaution after or before giving a fatwa. His order is permissible but he expresses it as *Ehtiyate-Mustahab,* which means Recommended Precaution. In this case, his followers can choose not to perform that particular act.

An example will help us better understand this term. It is Ehtiyate-Mustahab that when Salaatul Jama'at is being prayed, the people in the second row should wait for those in the first row to recite their Takbir before reciting their own takbir. This means that those in the second row can chose not to wait and still pray valid Salaat.

III. Ehtiyate - Waajib

If a marja'e marks a fatwa as Ehtiyate-Waajib, then this means that his followers must act according to it. If however, they have some *Ishkal* (Doubts) regarding it then they can follow the ruling of another Marja'e Taqleed who may be available.

A case of Ehtiyate-Waajib is for example, when you find a lost item and cannot trace its owner. It is Ehtiyate-Waajib for you to give out that item in charity on behalf of the owner. This means that if another Marja'e has a different fatwa regarding this issue, which you find easier to perform then you can choose to follow him.

LESSON 15
PHILOSOPHY OF PRAYER
Part 1

The most important act of *ebadat* (Worship) in Islam is Salaat (Prayer). It is an expression of total submission to Allah (S.W.T.) and a means of communication between the Creator and His servants.

Imam Ali ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) has said about prayer:
"Know that every action you do will depend on you salaat."

From this we know for a fact that is our salaat is accepted then all other actions are also accepted and if our salaat is rejected then so are our other deeds.

"The prayer is what differentiates Mo'meen from Unbeliever. Whoever leaves it and claims to have belief, his own actions belie him and will be a witness against him."

"Remind yourselves that every action from you must be from the mediator of Salaat."

Salaat greatly affects the lives of those who perform it. It keeps the soul of a person free from idolatry and when carried out sincerely, it also helps to cure moral diseases such as infidelity, hypocrisy, pride, dishonesty etc.

By praying at the specified times, a person learns to be both disciplined and punctual. It gives a purpose to the lives of people and has a stabilising effect. In times of stress, salaat provides a oasis of peace where a person can forget all worries and cares and rest his weary head on the doorstep of Allah (S.W.T.). the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) used to say to Bilal, who was the mu'adhin of the Muslims, *"Comfort me, O Bilal!"* meaning that he should recite the adhaan and call out for prayer.

Salaat is a source of piety and perfection. Through is performance a person can discover the hidden secrets of his soul and its amazing relationship with Allah (S.W.T.). All those acts that surround it or are related to it also fall under its special influence. For this reason we shall look at the things connected to and performed within Salaat and study the philosophy behind each. This will help us better appreciate why we perform it in the manner we do.

1. Qiblah
   During the first years of prophethood, Mecca was still the centre of idol worshipping and the Kuffar had filled the Holy Ka'aba with idols that they used to pray to. Thus, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and the Muslims used to pray facing Baytul Muqaddas i.e. Masjidul Aqsa in Jerusalem. They did this for 13 years in Mecca and the first few in Medina.
   At this time, the Jews began to mock the Muslims saying that they were using Jewish holy sites for their religious prayers. The people also began to ask the

Prophet (s.a.w.w.) why they did not face the Ka'aba. They said that if the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) truly preached the same faith as Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.)'s then they should have faced the Ka'aba built by him.

It was soon after this that Allah (S.W.T.) told the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) to change Qiblah:
"Indeed We see the turning of your face to heaven, so We shall surely turn you to a Qiblah which you shall like. Turn then your face towards the sacred mosque."

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) received this verse when he had completed two rakaats of a four rakaat prayer facing Baytul Muqaddas and he immediately turned towards the Ka'aba to complete the remaining two. Unfortunately, even after this, there were some who criticised this change and so Allah (S.W.T.) revealed another verse saying: *"Any direction you face in your prayers, indeed you are facing Allah."*

We should keep in mind that the Ka'aba was chosen as qiblah to make the Muslims independent of the Jews. Allah (S.W.T.) did not wish for them to have to rely on others for a holy site. The Ka'aba provides a central point for all Muslims. They turn towards it not only in prayer and dua but, at all times: when eating, sleeping, in death, when slaughtering an animal etc.

The Ka'aba provides an external and physical qiblah. It acts as a symbol of unity of the Muslim ummah. A Believers true qiblah, though, lies in his heart, which faces and submits to Allah (S.W.T.) in prayer.

2. Adhaan

Adhaan is the call to prayer and a mustahab pre-requisite to Salaat. It begins with the professing of ones belief in Allah (S.W.T.) and ends with the same. In between, one acknowledges the tenets of Nubuwwat and Imamat.

Adhaan prepares a person for Salaat by reminding him of his basic beliefs and brings him closer to Allah (S.W.T.) before he actually begins his communication with the Almighty.

Its beauty in words and depth in meaning not only enhance the spirit of the reciter but also give him strength of conviction.

3. Place and Dress

When praying, a person must ensure that his clothes and the place of prayer are clean and Taahir. Neither should be *Ghasbi*. Also, any money used to obtain either should be pure i.e. khums and zakaat should have been paid on it and it should not have been earned in a haram manner.

Concerning the kind of clothes, it is recommended that they be white in colour and new if possible. The Ma'soomeen also encouraged application of perfume

before prayers are undertaken. The basic aim of all this being to consciously purify oneself for a meeting with one's Lord. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has told us, *"The Key of acceptance of prayers is only through purity."*

When you physically purify yourself, it is natural that you will also try and clear your thoughts from any evil or immorality. It is necessary to achieve both types of cleanliness – internal and external – in order for prayers to be accepted. It is for this reason that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) also said, *"Allah (S.W.T.) never accepts a prayer if the man's heart is not present with his body."*

Other rules regarding the place of worship is that it should be somewhere stable. If the area does not allow normal standing or correct performance of ruku/sajdah then one cannot pray there. In the case of travelling, whether it is by plane, ship or train, one should pray and try to remain still as much as possible.

Also, when performing sajdah, the distance between the place where ones forehead rests and the level of ones toes, should not be higher than a span of four fingers.

Praying in a place where there are pictures, sculptures or statues is makrooh. It is also makrooh for na-Mahram men and women to pray together in the same room.

4. Wudhoo

We have discussed the performing of wudhoo in previous books. In this lesson we only wish to discuss its philosophy. According to Imam Redha (a.s.) wudhoo has three important aspects:

- Spiritual motivation and
- Gaining nearness to Allah (S.W.T.)
- Bodily cleanliness.

When performing wudhoo, it is recommended to use cold water because this refreshes and motivates a person. Wudhoo is meant to act as a cleanser on the soul, washing away minor sins. It is thus, highly recommended to stay in wudhoo at all times especially when studying or performing any constructive task. By creating an atmosphere of purity around a person, it helps him to avoid committing sins.

It is important that while performing wudhoo, we should not waste the water we use. *Israaf* (Extravagance) is a great sin and Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) has said, *"To throw remaining food or water is Israaf …"*

LESSON 16
PHILOSOPHY OF PRAYER
Part 2

Having looked at the reasons behind certain actions related to prayer, let us now study a couple of the parts of Salaat in particular that are extremely profound in their philosophy. Of course, we can do no justice to the depth of the matter but if you think more about these things on your own, you will find that they do have great effect on you.

1. Niyyah

All actions in Islam are based on the intention of the person performing them. If a person does good deeds with the aim of gaining praise from others then his action is of no use. The aim of every act must be only to gain nearness to Allah (S.W.T.).

A man who depends on the praise of others, is destined to be disappointed because not everyone will admire him and it is impossible to please everyone all the time. His dignity will depend on the people and he will be respected according to their personal whims. However, a man who performs good deeds for the pleasure of Allah (S.W.T.) has no such problem because he understands that as long he aims to gain the Mercy of his Lord, he will receive his just due. He therefore gains a distinction that does not depend on any human being.

Allah (S.W.T.) says, many times in the Holy Qur'an
"Surely all dignity belongs to the Almighty Allah."

The sign of a sincere action (*Amal-e-Khaalis*) is that the performer does not expect any praise or appreciation as a result of it. For example, when a person gives out charity, he should publicize the act and preferably keep it a secret.

Even in acts of ebadat, one should not involve *Riyaa* (showing off). Praying in the front line in the mosque, coming to Salaat punctually, dressing with great care for salaat are all admirable acts as long as they are done solely for the sake of Allah (S.W.T.). If the aim of impressing others or showing off ones piety comes into the ebadat, then it is nullified and considered a grave sin.

We should remember that our acts - big or small – are the only things that can help us in the hereafter. The people in this world have no influence in the aakhira and we should not waste our time getting their approval. *Ikhlaas* (sincerity) in worship is the only way that we can both attain perfection and be close to Allah (S.W.T.).

2. Takbiratul – Ehraam

After niyyah, we proclaim *Allaho Akbar!* (God is the Greatest!) as a signal of the beginning of our prayer. Once we have recited this Takbiratul Ehraam, we have left the world around us and entered the communion with Allah (S.W.T.). This state lasts until we finish our Salaat and we should allow nothing to distract us from it.

Whilst in prayer, we do not turn away, speak or divert our attention to something else. This automatically nullifies Salaat. We should keep in mind that by reciting Salaat, we have asked Allah (S.W.T.) to listen to our pleas and our proclamation of Faith, we cannot then turn our concentration away from our Lord until the end of this conversation. In order to help retain maximum concentration, it is recommended to focus on the place of Sajdah.

By beginning our Salaat with the words 'God is the Greatest!', we admit our weakness and dependence to Him. It allows us to create a feeling of total submission in our hearts as we stand before the All-Powerful Creator who gave life to us. Imam Ali (a.s.) says, *"The pious men see Allah (S.W.T.) as the Greatest, everything besides the Almighty is small."*

In another hadith, Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) says,
" Whoever says with his tongue 'Allahu Akbar!' but in his heart believes others to be greater than Him or put his reliance on other worldly powers, is indeed a liar and a hypocrite."

Reciting Takbiratul Ehraam at the start of every prayer serves a reminder and a boost to our courage in standing up against the oppressors in our daily lives.

The Spirit of Salaat

Salaat, through its words, movements, prostrations, bows and supplications, provides a person with a means of rebuilding his personality afresh.

Properly performed with understanding of the recitations and the philosophies involved, it is a spiritual journey of sorts – a *me'raj* (Heavenly Ascension) for the Believer. On the other hand, prayer performed as a ritual and with no concentration is like a dead body without a spirit.

As we attempt to understand and focus on our salaat, it may help to choose a place that is simple, quiet and private when praying to avoid any distractions. Salaat is not a sport or a play that we can perform it as we wish in a hurried manner. Discipline is the of the utmost importance. Remember, if we wish to fully exploit this treasure trove, then we must be prepared to put some effort into our actions.

NOTE:
It is highly recommended that one should recite Tasbih of Hadhrat Fatema al-Zahra (a.s.) after the completion of every Salaat.

Reciting Salaat Correctly

There are many conditions of salaat and we have discussed the actual way in which to pray before. Some other general rules of importance which validate Salaat include:

- Correct pronunciation of the Arabic words.
- Qiyaam must be performed and if it is left out - intentionally or unintentionally – Salaat is baatil.
- Two sujud must be performed. The forehead should be placed on earth, paper, wood, or leaf but not on anything edible or artificially coloured e.g. carpets. If a person feels that something is preventing his forehead from touching the mohr or earth he is performing sajdah on, he should carefully remove that thing without raising his head off the mohr.

As Muslims, we must learn all the rules regarding Salaat and other Ebadat and understand how to refer to the Masa'el (Laws) book when we need to.

Things that Invalidate Salaat

Certain things invalidate Salaat and are called *Mubtilaatus Salaat.* In this lesson, we shall list a few. These are:

a) Najasat of clothes.
b) Ghasbi place of prayer.
c) Breaking of wudhoo through sleep, visiting the toilet etc.
d) Lack of discipline in Salaat e.g. looking away or speaking to someone.

Doubts in Salaat

There are times when a person finds himself doubting his actions in Salaat. There are different types of *Shak* (doubts) that may occur. Out of these:

- Some invalidate a prayer as soon as they occur,
- Some should be ignored and
- Others have remedial procedures to correct them.

Doubts that invalidate a prayer

1. Doubts about number of rakaats prayed in Fajr.
2. Doubts about number of rakaats prayed in Maghrib.

Doubts that should be ignored:

These refer to Salaat with 4 rakaats.

1. Doubts about the number of rakaats that a person has performed.
2. If after completing the prayer, a person doubts if he performed tashahhud in the second rakaat or if he recited *dhikr* of ruku/sajdah.
3. Doubts of a person who has a habit of scepticism.
4. Doubts of the Imam leading prayers regarding the number of rakaats when the Ma'mun (Follower) knows the number or vice verse if the Ma'mun is sceptical.
5. Doubts that occur in Mustahab prayers and Salaat-e-Ehtiyaat.

Doubts that can be remedied:

Certain doubts that occur in a salaat of 4 rakaats have remedies that correct the prayer. A person should think about the doubt and if he arrives at a decision, he should act according to it. However, if the doubt remains then he should follow one of the rules below as relevant.

1. **Doubt:** A person after finishing the 2nd Sajdah of the rakaat doubts whether it was the second or third rakaat.

   Solution: He should assume it is the third rakaat and pray one more to finish the Salaat. Then he should offer one rakaat of *Salaatul Ehtiyat,* standing, as an obligatory precaution.

2. **Doubt:** A person after finishing the 2nd Sajdah of the rakaat doubts whether it was the second or fourth rakaat.

   Solution: He should assume it is the fourth rakaat and finish the Salaat. Then he should offer two rakaats of *Salaatul Ehtiyat,* standing, as obligatory precaution.

3. **Doubt:** A person after finishing the 2nd Sajdah of the rakaat doubts whether it was the second, third or fourth rakaat.

   Solution: He should assume it is the fourth rakaat and finish the Salaat. Then he should offer two rakaats of *Salaatul Ehtiyat,* standing and two rakaats, sitting as an obligatory precaution.

4. **Doubt:** A person after finishing the 2nd Sajdah of the rakaat doubts whether it was the fourth or a fifth rakaat.

   Solution: He should assume it is the fourth rakaat and finish the Salaat. Then he should perform *Sajdatus Sahw* as obligatory precaution. This rule applies to every situation of doubt in which a person suspects he may have prayed more than four rakaats.

Important Notes:

- When a suspicion arises regarding number of rakaats being less or more than 4, the general rule is that for a doubt of less rakaats correction is through Salaatul Ehtiyat and for a doubt of more rakaats correction is through Sajdatus Sahw.

- If doubt occurs at *any time* before the completion of the second Sajdah, then the prayer is void and must be performed again.

Salaatul Ehtiyat

This is a corrective prayer performed straight after the completion of the Salaat in which the doubt has occurred. The procedure is as follows:

- Make your niyyah then recite Takbiratul Ehram followed by Sura al-Hamd.
- Go into Ruku and Sajdah as for normal Salaat.
- If the corrective measures require praying of only one rakaat then recite Tashahhud and Salaam at this time and complete the prayer, otherwise stand for a second Rakaat and recite it in the same way as the first ending with the Tashahhud and Salaam.

Note that in Salaatul Ehtiyat, no second surah or Qunoot is recited. It is also Ehtiyate Waajib to recite *Bismillah* and Sura al-Hamd very softly.

Sajdatus Sahw

In certain cases, a person must perform Sajdatus Sahw to remedy his doubt. This is usually defined in the rule when it concerns number of rakaats. There are, however, some other times when it must be prayed. These include:

- When one forgets to perform one of the two Sajdahs.
- When one talks in Salaat unintentionally.
- When Salaam is recited in the wrong place.
- When one forgets Tashahhud in Salaat.

The manner in which it is performed is to make niyyah, then perform two sajdah in the normal fashion but with the following dhikr :
"Bismillahi wa Billahi Allahoma Swalli A'laa Muhammadin."
Or
"Bismillahi wa Billahi, Assalaamu Alaikum was Rahmatullahi was Baratuhu."

After the second sajdah, sit up and recite tashahhud and Salaam.

Carelessness in Prayer

Salaat as we have mentioned time and again is the central pivot of all worship in Islam. It must be prayed and there is no excuse for not performing it. In fact, even if a person is too sick to pray standing up, it is recommended he sit and pray and if this is not possible, he should sleep with his right side facing Qiblah and perform his Salaat with his head and eyes. All this shows us how important Salaat to Allah (S.W.T.).

According to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)
"Allah (S.W.T.) takes away all the blessings from a person who does not pray or is careless of his salaat. He will dies in a very bad state, be tortured in Barzakh and face extreme hardship during the Day of Judgement."

In another hadith he says:
" Whosoever takes his salaat lightly, he will not be from my ummah."

The Holy Qur'an also speaks of Salaat, saying:
"And Woe! To the praying one who are unmindful of their prayers, who do good to be seen and withhold the necessities of life."

Sura Ma'un, Verses 4 – 6

A Muslim must constantly try to improve the quality of his Salaat. He should avoid indulging in vices such as jealously, backbiting, pride and usurping the rights of others in any way. We should avoid praying Salaat when sleepy or tired and instead wait a little until our minds are fresh enough to concentrate full on what we are saying and doing.

In conclusion let us ponder on the salaat of our Ma'soomeen (a.s.) and how they used to prepare themselves for meeting their Lord. Imam Ali (a.s.) would turn pale whilst performing wudhoo and used to say,
"It is time for me to give back the Divine trust to the Almighty (S.W.T.)"

LESSON 17
SOME SPECIAL SALAAT

In addition to the daily waajib Salaat, there are some prayers in Islam that hold special significance. Let us look at these different Salaat and the circumstances regarding them.

1. Salaatul Jama'at

In our previous studies, we have seen that Islam emphasizes participation in Salaatul Jama'at (Congregational Prayers) because it helps to create bonds of brotherhood and unity amongst the Muslims.

The equality brought about by standing together to pray to One God is what Islam is base on. Therefore, to miss congregational prayers without a good reason is Haraam. We have discussed Salaatul Jama'at in detail before, so we will now look at only a few general rules regarding its performance.

i) The Imam leading the Jama'at must be Aadil (Just), Pious and known not to commit any big or small sins.
ii) The Imam can be followed in any of his daily prayers by the ma'moon (followers).
iii) If you do not know whether the Imam is praying wajib or mustahab prayers, you cannot join him.
iv) If you pray behind the Imam and later wish to change to your niyyah to *furaada* (Individual) you can do so during the salaat only.
v) If a person wished to join the Jamaat in the 3rd or 4th Rakaat but is not sure whether he can recite his surahs of the first rakaat in the time the Imam finishes reciting Tasbihate Arb'ae then he should wait until the Imam goies to ruku and join the salaat from there.
vi) Ma'moon must wait until the Imam finishes reciting his Takbiratul Ehram before they recite theirs. They cannot start while he is in the middle.
vii) It is recommended that the lines in Jama'at be straight and the people shoud stand shoulder to shoulder. Also, a person should not stand alone, as long as there is place in a row.
viii) It is makrooh for the ma'moon to recite dhikr so loudly that the Imam can hear them.

2. Salaatul Jumu'ah

Friday is the greatest day of the week for Muslims. It is the favoured by Allah (S.W.T.) and one of the special acts of ebadat for this day is the praying of Salaatul Jumu'ah. This prayer is preceded by a sermon where the Imam is required to update the Muslim Ummah about issue that concern them. Apart from moral and religious facts, he should also try to speak of the social and political situations facing the Muslims worldwide. Through these Friday *Khutba* (Sermons), the Muslims learn about each other and become more aware of Islam.

The Khutba is part and parcel of Salaatul Jumu'ah and maintaining silence during the sermon is Ehtiyate Mustahad. Every Muslim should try and attend the prayer early enough to listen to it but in the event that they miss it, they can still join in the Salaat either in the first or second rakaat.

How to Pray

Salaatul Jumu'ah has 2 rakaats just like Subh. It is mustahab to recite the surahs loudly when praying and especially to recite Sura Jumu'ah after Sura al-Hamd in the first rakaat and Sura Munafiqoon in the secondd rakaat. There are two Qunoots in the prayer - one in the first rakaat before Ruku and the other in the second rakaat after Ruku and before going into Sajdah.

Note:
A person who joins in Salaatul Jumu'ah does not have to pray Dhohr but it is Ehtiyate Mustahab for him to do so.

3. Salatul Eidayn

The term Salaatul Eidayn refers to the prayers performed in congregation on the days of the two great Eids in the Islamic Calendar i.e. *Eid-ul-Fitr* which marks the end of Ramdhan and *Idd-ul-Adha* which is celebrated after the completion of Hajj. The prayer consists of two rakaats just as Salaatul Jumu'ah and the main difference between them is that the sermon in the Salaatul Eid is given *after* the prayer not before.

Some important facts about these prayers are as follows:

i) Salatul Eidayn is waajib only during the presence of the divine Imam (a.s.) and otherwise it becomes mustahab.
ii) It recommended that a person breakfast on dates before going for Eid prayers on Eid-ul-Fitr. On the day of Eid-ul-Adha, it is mustahab for him to eat a portion of the meat he has slaughtered, after finishing the prayers.

How to Pray

Salaatul Eid has two rakaats and can be performed at any time from sunrise to noon on the day of Eid.

- In the first rakaat, after reciting Sura al-Hamd and another sura, the Imam recites 5 *takbirs*. Each takbir is followed by a Qunoot. After the 5th qunoot, the Imam proceeds with the steps of ruku and sajdah.
- The second rakaat is prayed as the first one except that it has 4 takbirs and Qunoots. The prayer in completed with tashahhud and salaam as usual.

4. Salaatul Ayaat

The universe around us is full of marvels that are signs of the existence of Allah (S.W.T.). The moon, the sun, plants, water, mountains, stars – all are wondrous creations and provide constant amazement for the human intellect.

However, it is also human nature that when a person is exposed to a certain object or process repeatedly then it looses its initial appeal and no longer fascinates him constantly. This is what happens to us in our daily lives. Because we see the sun rise and set every day and the moon shines on us every night, we tend to forget the power and complexity of these celestial bodies and the forces that control them. It all becomes ordinary to us.

In order to remind us of Him and to prevent us from taking things for granted, Allah (S.W.T.) sometimes causes certain event to take place which are out of the ordinary and which remind us that we have no power over the world around us. When events such as sun eclipses, moon eclipses, earthquakes and other natural phenomena occur, they serve as an alarm bell to mankind and remind people to turn back to the only All-Powerful entity. At such times, one should turn back to Him in praise and seeking forgiveness. For this reason, we pray *Salaatul Ayaat* (Prayer of the Signs) after experiencing any such event.

Salaatul Ayaat becomes waajib when one of 4 things happen:

a) Sun eclipse – partial ?
b) Moon eclipse – even if it is only a partial eclipse
c) Earthquakes – even if it is too mild to invoke fear
d) Lightning, hurricanes, tornadoes, red and black cyclones, volcanoes and other natural disasters that bring fear in the hearts of people.

For the first two cases, a person should perform the Salaat between the time the eclipse starts and the time it ends. It is recommended NOT to delay the prayer until the eclipse begins to clear.

In the case of earthquakes, thunderstorms and the like, it is wajib to perform the Salaat as soon as possible since delaying it is haram. In any case, you must perform it with the niyyah of Ada – not Qadha – at whatever time in your life you manage to pray it.

How to Pray

Salaatul Ayaat, like the other special prayers, also has two rakaats. In every rakaat there are 5 ruku's. It should be performed as follows:

- Make niyyah
- Recite Takbiratul Ehram
- Recite Sura al-Hamd and any other surah. Then go into ruku and recite dhikr. Stand up and repeat the above until you perform the 5th ruku. After this complete the rakaat with sajdah and stand up for the second rakaat.
- Perform the second rakaat in the same manner as the first but finish the namaaz with tashahhud and salaam.

Another method of praying Salaatul Ayaat is to replace the recitation of a different second surah with one surah of 5 ayatas divided into ayats. This

means that in every Qiyam, you recite one verse of the selected surah after reciting Sura la-Hamd. You thus complete it in the 5 qiyams that you stand for per rakaat – this is especially possible using Sura Ikhlaas, which has 5 verses (including Bismillah).

5. Salaatul Qadha

When a person recompenses for a missed prayer, this Salaat is called *Qadha*. It means that he did not pray it at the allocated time but is now replacing it after a lapsed period. It may be prayed in the following circumstances:

i) When a person misses his waajib prayers.
ii) When a person realises that he had not performed his salaat properly but the time has lapsed for that particular prayer.